

Investigations on the Rupture of the N-N-Bond within the Anodic Oxidation and Catalytic Decomposition of Hydrazine

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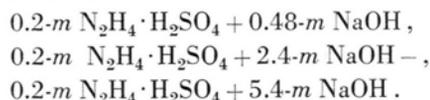
Mass spectrometrical measurements of the off gas composition formed in the anodic oxidation or catalytic decomposition of hydrazine at platinized platinum, Raney-nickel and amalgamated sintered nickel as electrocatalysts show that only up to 4% of the oxidation of hydrazine occurs via N–N-bond splitting.

Using ^{15}N marked N_2H_4 we investigated whether the N–N-bond is split in the anodic oxidation or catalytic decomposition of hydrazine. We used platinized platinum (pt. Pt), Raney-nickel (RAN), and amalgamated sintered nickel (SNA) as working electrodes. These materials were chosen, because the reaction mechanism of the anodic oxidation at SNA (direct oxidation of the N_2H_4 -molecule in the charge transfer reaction¹) is different from that at pt. Pt and RAN (preceding dehydrogenation of the N_2H_4 ²). Therefore, different rates in the splitting reaction were possible at the different electrode materials.

The RAN-electrode consisted of an aluminium-nickel-alloy (1 : 1) which was deposited on a nickel screen by flame-spraying. The sintered-nickel-electrode was amalgamated by loading the porous electrode with hydrogen in 1 M KOH + 1 M $\text{Na}(\text{BH}_4)$ and afterwards dipping it in to a HgCl_2 -solution³. By this means 1 ml $\text{Hg}/60$ mg Ni was deposited.

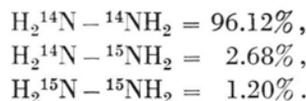
Experiments were carried out at the rest-potential (catalytic decomposition) and at a constant overpotential of +150 mV. Usually, 2 cm³ off gas at atmospheric pressure were collected and transferred into probe-flask of about 200 cm³, which had been evacuated to 10^{-2} torr and filled several times with argon gas.

All solutions contained 0.2-M ^{15}N marked $\text{N}_2\text{H}_4 \cdot \text{H}_2\text{SO}_4$ and NaOH at different concentrations:



The relative contents of $\text{H}_2^{14}\text{N}-^{14}\text{NH}_2$, $\text{H}_2^{14}\text{N}-^{15}\text{NH}_2$, and $\text{H}_2^{15}\text{N}-^{15}\text{NH}_2$ in the solution were measured by oxidizing the hydrazine chemically with KJO_3 , be-

cause in this oxidation reaction no splitting of the N–N-bond occurs^{4,5}. This yielded the following composition for the hydrazine used:



All measurements were carried out at 23, 60, and 90 °C. The results are listed in tables 1 to 6 by giving the $^{29}\text{N}_2 : ^{30}\text{N}_2$ ratio. All values are mean-values of 3–5 gas probes.

Under the assumption that the N–N-bond is not split, according to the specifications given above, a ratio of $^{29}\text{N}_2 : ^{30}\text{N}_2 = 2.68 : 1.20 = 2.24$ should be found. On the other hand, if the N–N-bond is broken, the ratio should be $^{29}\text{N}_2 : ^{30}\text{N}_2 = 4.94 : 0.0644 = 76.7$. In this case the produced N-atoms or NH_x -radicals can recombine freely, so that a statistical distribution of the nitrogen-isotopes should be expected. The given ^{14}N - and ^{15}N -portions of 97.46% and 2.54%, respectively, yield

$$\begin{aligned} ^{28}\text{N}_2 : ^{29}\text{N}_2 : ^{30}\text{N}_2 \\ = (97.46)^2 : (2 \cdot 97.46 \cdot 2.54) : (2.54)^2 \end{aligned}$$

or in per cent

$$^{28}\text{N}_2 = 94.9\%, \quad ^{29}\text{N}_2 = 4.94\%, \quad ^{30}\text{N}_2 = 0.0644\%.$$

In all experiments the $^{29}\text{N}_2 : ^{30}\text{N}_2$ -ratio lies very close to the value of 2.24 expected for the maintenance of the N–N-bond. This value is exactly verified only in a few results with pt. Pt under anodic load. All the other ratios are somewhat larger, so that besides the main reaction a relatively insignificant side reaction with a rupture of the N–N-bond takes place.

The contribution of this side reaction is given in the tables by the per cent rate y , which was calculated with the equation

$$y = \frac{120(^{29}\text{N}_2 / ^{30}\text{N}_2) - 268}{2.26 + 1.1356(^{29}\text{N}_2 / ^{30}\text{N}_2)}.$$

This equation can be developed from the system

$$\begin{aligned} ^{29}\text{N}_2 &= \left(\frac{4.94 y}{100} + \frac{2.86 (100 - y)}{100} \right) \%, \\ ^{30}\text{N}_2 &= \left(\frac{0.0644 y}{100} + \frac{1.20 (100 - y)}{100} \right) \%. \end{aligned}$$

To summarize, one can say that the N–N-bond is maintained to 96–98% in the catalytic decomposition of hydrazine. An influence of the OH^- -activity, the temperature, or the electrode material was not observed within the limits of error.

In the case of the anodic overpotential of 150 mV, 98–100% of the nitrogen obtained is originated

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from a reaction without N-N-rupture. Here, however, an influence of the electrode material was found. The splitting portion of the reaction is particularly small at pt.Pt and significantly greater at RAN. A dependence of OH⁻-activity or temperature on the splitting reaction was also not found under anodic load.

Table 1. Solution 0.2 m N₂H₄·H₂SO₄+0.48 n NaOH; rest potential.

Temperature	23 °C		60 °C		90 °C	
Electrode	²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]	
pt.Pt	2.33	2.3	2.31	1.8	2.33	2.3
RAN	2.29	3.6	2.32	2.0	2.32	2.0
SNA	2.38	3.3	2.34	2.5	2.31	1.8

Table 2. Solution: 0.2 m N₂H₄·H₂SO₄+0.48 n NaOH; η = +150 mV.

Temperature	23 °C		60 °C		90 °C	
Electrode	²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]	
pt.Pt	2.24	0	2.26	0.5	2.27	0.8
RAN	2.29	1.3	2.28	1.0	2.32	2.0
SNA	2.34	2.4	2.25	0.3	2.30	1.5

Table 3. Solution: 0.2 m N₂H₄·H₂SO₄+2.4 n NaOH; rest potential.

Temperature	23 °C		60 °C		90 °C	
Electrode	²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]	
pt.Pt	2.36	2.9	2.38	3.4	2.38	3.4
RAN	2.34	2.4	2.40	3.8	2.39	3.7
SNA	2.33	2.3	2.34	2.5	2.38	3.4

¹ J. Heitbaum und W. Vielstich, *Electrochim. Acta* **18**, 501 [1973].

² J. Heitbaum und W. Vielstich, *Electrochim. Acta* **18**, 976 [1973].

Finally, it should be mentioned that some experiments have been carried out with lower anodic overpotential and even with cathodic overpotential, and at pt.Pt in acid solutions (1 m H₂SO₄ + 0.05 m N₂H₄·H₂SO₄), too. However, there was no experiment showing more than 4% for the splitting reaction.

Table 4. Solution: 0.2 m N₂H₄·H₂SO₄+2.4 n NaOH; η = +150 mV.

Temperature	23 °C		60 °C		90 °C	
Electrode	²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]	
pt.Pt	2.26	0.5	2.25	0.2	2.24	0
RAN	2.30	1.5	2.32	2.0	2.32	2.0
SNA	2.27	0.8	2.29	1.3	2.28	1.0

Table 5. Solution: 0.2 m N₂H₄·H₂SO₄+5.4 n NaOH; rest potential.

Temperature	23 °C		60 °C		90 °C	
Electrode	²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]	
pt.Pt	2.42	4.3	2.33	2.3	2.35	2.6
RAN	2.41	4.0	2.43	4.6	2.36	2.9
SNA	2.38	3.4	2.33	2.3	2.33	2.3

Table 6. Solution: 0.2 m N₂H₄·H₂SO₄+5.4 n NaOH; η = +150 mV.

Temperature	23 °C		60 °C		90 °C	
Electrode	²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]		²⁹ N ₂ / ³⁰ N ₂ y [%]	
pt.Pt	2.29	1.3	2.26	0.5	2.26	0.5
RAN	2.33	2.3	2.31	1.8	2.33	2.3
SNA	2.26	0.5	2.28	1.0	2.27	0.8

³ M. Jung, Dt. Offenlegungsschrift 1 933 778.

⁴ W. C. E. Higginson, D. Sutton, *J. Chem. Soc.* 1402 [1953].

⁵ J. W. Cahn, R. E. Powell, *J. Amer. Chem. Soc.* **76**, 2568 [1954].