

The Characteristic Behavior of Recoil Tritium Atom in Solid Neopentane at 77 K. The Application of a Hot Zone Model

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The behavior of recoil tritium atoms in solid neopentane containing a small amount of alkane has been studied at 77 K by means of ESR spectroscopy and radio-gas chromatography. Though it was reported that the H (or D) atoms produced in the radiolysis and photolysis of solid neopentane react selectively with the solute alkane, the T atoms neither diffuse into the matrix at 77 K nor react selectively with the solute alkane. Most of the recoil T atoms react in their own track. The results are explained by a hot-zone model. The radius and the duration time of the hot zone are estimated to be ≈ 60 Å and $\approx 10^{-10}$ s respectively.

Tritium-technology in fusion reactors requires the elucidation of the behavior of hot tritium atoms in solid materials, which involve the integrity of the constructing materials as well as a tritium inventory. So far many studies have been undertaken on the hot tritium reaction in the gas phase, and the fundamental reaction modes have well been established,¹⁾ but many fewer studies have been reported for the solid phase. In the condensed phases, there exist two important factors controlling the final product-distributions. One is the rapid collisional stabilization of excited primary products, and the other is a cage effect. The latter effect, due to the confinements of both radicals and a thermalized atom, constitutes one of the central interests in the condensed phases. However, it has been verified experimentally that the cage effect is much less important in the hot tritium atom because of its small size and because of the high probability of diffusing out from the cage wall.²⁾ For example, the change from the high-pressure gas phase to the liquid leaves the H substitution reaction by T in 1,2-dichloro-1,2-difluoroethane almost unaffected.³⁾ Furthermore, the increase in the yield of *c*-C₄H₇T, found in the phase change of deuterated cyclobutane from gas to a liquid or to a solid was well interpreted by the rapid collisional stabilization of excited *c*-C₄D₇T* molecules in the condensed phase.⁴⁾

Recently, the behavior of H (or D) atoms, produced by the photolysis of hydrogen iodide or by the γ -radiolysis of alkane, have been studied in the solid alkane at 77 K.⁵⁾ When hydrogen atoms with an initial kinetic energy of 2–3 eV are produced in solid neopentane containing a small amount of alkane at 77 K, they migrate through the solid matrix and abstract hydrogen atoms selectively from the solute alkane. The selective hydrogen-atom abstraction has the following characteristic features: (1) The ratio of the rate constant for the hydrogen atom abstraction from the solute to that from the solvent ($k_{\text{solute}}/k_{\text{solvent}}$) is 700 for neopentane-alkane mixtures at 77 K. (2) The selective hydrogen-atom-abstraction reaction by H or D atoms in the neopentane-alkane mixtures at 77 K becomes more favored with a decrease in the initial energy of the H or D atoms. (3) The selective hydrogen atom abstraction is suppressed above a certain temperature (140 K). (4) The selective hydrogen-atom abstraction is effectively caused by both H and D atoms; there exists no definite isotope effect between them. Thus, it can be expected

that the T atom in the energy range of the photolysis and the radiolysis also reacts selectively with solute alkanes at 77 K if the T atom migrates through the matrix at that temperature.

The recoil tritium atoms produced by the ${}^6\text{Li}(n,\alpha)\text{T}$ reaction have an initial energy of 2.7 MeV. After the consequences of collisional energy losses, they enter the reaction-energy range and react there. However, certain fractions of them continue to escape reactions and finally become thermalized T atoms. In the cooling processes down to thermalization, the T atoms must pass through the energy range of 2–3 eV, which is equal to the initial energies of the hydrogen atoms formed in the photolysis. The effects of scavengers, such as O₂ and Br₂, on the recoil T-atom reaction in CH₄,⁶⁾ C₂H₆,⁷⁾ and *i*-C₄H₁₀^{1a)} systems indicated that 30–40% of the total recoil T atoms are thermalized in the gas phase.

The question raised here is whether or not such T atoms can migrate through the solid alkane at 77 K, as the hydrogen atoms formed in the photolysis can. Here, in order to solve this problem, the reactions of T atoms were studied in neopentane-alkane mixtures. Although the preliminary experiments⁸⁾ provided no evidence for the selective H abstraction reaction of recoil T atoms, the failure in the observation might have been because the sample temperature was raised during the neutron irradiations. In the present experiments, the sample temperature during the irradiation was checked through the ESR measurements of radicals formed concomitantly. The results obtained were analyzed by comparison with the characteristic features of the behavior of the H (or D) atoms formed in the photolysis and radiolysis.

Experimental

The LiF, used as the target for ${}^6\text{Li}(n,\alpha)\text{T}$, was purchased from the Johnson Matthey Chemicals. The mass-spectroscopic analysis showed that the ${}^6\text{Li}/{}^7\text{Li}$ ratio in the LiF is 0.04. The neopentane and propane were more than 99.9 mol % and 99.7 mol % respectively in purity. At least 95% of the isobutane-2-*d*₁ (*i*-C₄H₉D) was correctly labeled with the deuterium at the tertiary position. The 2-methyl-*d*₃-propane-1,1,1,3,3,3-*d*₆ (*i*-C₄D₉H), supplied by Merck Sharp and Dohm, Canada, Ltd., has a listed isotopic purity of 98 mol %.

In order to make solid neopentane-alkane-LiF mixtures, the liquid mixtures were immersed rapidly in liquid nitrogen.

H atoms, produced by the radiolysis of neopentane, react effectively with the alkane solute to form alkyl radicals. The yields of the alkyl radicals increase with an increase in the concentration of the solute alkane.^{5c)} Thus, most of the alkane solute may be dissolved uniformly in the neopentane matrix at 77 K. A part of the LiF may be dissolved in the neopentane matrix, while the rest is precipitated in the solvent. Thus, T atoms may be produced from the dissolved LiF as well as the precipitated LiF.

The reagents were sealed into a quartz cell. The sealed cell was inserted into a polyethylene capsule packed with powered dry ice. Subsequently, the capsule was immersed in liquid N₂ until it reached an equilibrium and was then immediately irradiated in the pneumatic tube of the JRR-4 reactor of the Japan Atomic Energy Research Institute. The neutron flux and the dose rate of γ -rays from the reactor were 3×10^{13} n cm⁻² s⁻¹ and 2×10^8 rad h⁻¹ respectively.⁹⁾ At the end of the irradiation, some capsules were immersed in liquid N₂ to make them ready for the subsequent ESR measurements.

The free radicals of the irradiated samples were measured at 77 K with a JEOL-PE3X ESR spectrometer at a microwave power level of 0.2 mW, which did not result in a saturation of the signals of the alkyl radicals. The tritiated products were analyzed by means of radio-gas chromatography. A 5-m ferric oxide γ -alumina column at 77 K was used for the separation of HT and DT, and a 3-m Parapak Q column at 380 K, for the organic products. The two columns were combined by means of a double-column technique,¹⁰⁾ in which a whole sample can be injected at a time.

Results and Discussion

ESR Spectra of Irradiated Sample. Figure 1a shows the ESR spectrum of a *neo*-C₅H₁₂-*i*-C₄H₉D (2 mol %)-LiF mixture irradiated at 77 K in the reactor. The spectrum of eight lines, indicated by arrows (\downarrow), is ascribed to the *t*-C₄H₉ radical.¹¹⁾ The spectrum of three broad lines, indicated by arrows (\Downarrow), is ascribed to the

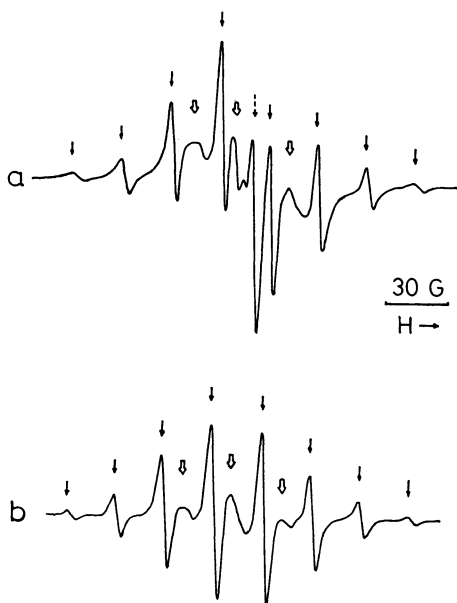


Fig. 1a. ESR spectrum of irradiated *neo*-C₅H₁₂-*i*-C₄H₉D- (2 mol %)-LiF mixture at 77 K with a reactor for 15 s at a dose of 0.8 Mrad. b. ESR spectrum of irradiated *neo*-C₅H₁₂-*i*-C₄H₉D (2 mol %) mixture at 77 K with γ -rays of Co-60 at a dose of 0.1 Mrad.

neo-C₅H₁₁ radical.¹¹⁾ The unsymmetrical spectrum, indicated by arrows (\downarrow), is due to a color center of irradiated quartz. Figure 1b shows the ESR spectrum of a *neo*-C₅H₁₂-*i*-C₄H₉D (2 mol %) mixture γ -irradiated at 77 K with Co-60. The spectrum consists of spectra of *neo*-C₅H₁₁ and *t*-C₄H₉ radicals. The amount of the *t*-C₄H₉ radical is about 30% of the total radical yield. Similarly, C₃H₇ or *t*-C₄D₉ radicals are remarkably produced in the γ -radiolysis of *neo*-C₅H₁₂ containing C₃H₈ (2 mol %) or *i*-C₄D₉H (2 mol %) at 77 K.

A comparison of Fig. 1a with Fig. 1b makes it obvious that the neutron-irradiation of the *neo*-C₅H₁₂-*i*-C₄H₉D- (2 mol %)-LiF mixture gives approximately the same ESR spectra of *neo*-C₅H₁₁ and *t*-C₄H₉ radicals as in the γ -irradiation. This is reasonable since, during the neutron-irradiation in the reactor, the sample is also exposed to a high dose of γ -rays. The chemical damage caused by the recoil T and ³He atoms amounts to only 1–2% of that caused by γ -rays.

According to the previous studies,⁵⁾ the *t*-C₄H₉ radicals are produced by the selective hydrogen-atom-abstraction reaction by H atoms produced from the radiolysis of neopentane (Reactions 1 and 2):

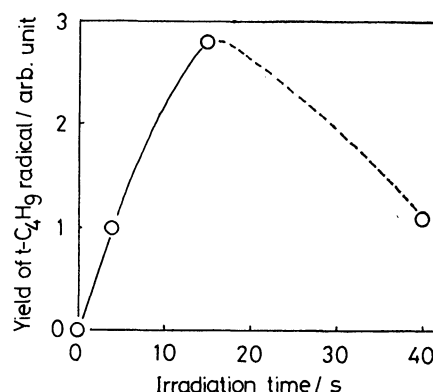
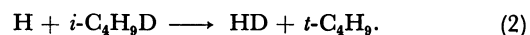
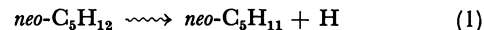


Fig. 2. Yield of *t*-C₄H₉ radical in the irradiation of *neo*-C₅H₁₂-*i*-C₄H₉D (2 mol %)-LiF mixture with a reactor against irradiation time.

Figure 2 shows the effect of the irradiation time in the reactor on the amount of the *t*-C₄H₉ radical produced in the irradiated *neo*-C₅H₁₂-*i*-C₄H₉D (2 mol %)-LiF mixture. The amount of the *t*-C₄H₉ radical increases almost linearly up to an irradiation time of 15 s, while the amount decreases drastically at 40 s. In the case of an irradiation time of 40 s, most of the *t*-C₄H₉ radicals may disappear as a result of the elevation of the temperature of the sample during the irradiation.¹²⁾ Thus, a sample temperature of near 77 K is assured within the irradiation time of 15 s, during which time the selective hydrogen-atom-abstraction reaction by T atoms can proceed. Therefore, the irradiation of the samples in the reactor was restricted to within 15 s.

Recoil T Atoms in Neopentane-Alkane Mixtures at 77 K. Table 1 shows the yields of tritiated products in the neopentane-alkane mixtures at 77 K. The DT/HT ratio in the *neo*-C₅H₁₂-*i*-C₄H₉D (2 mol %) system is only

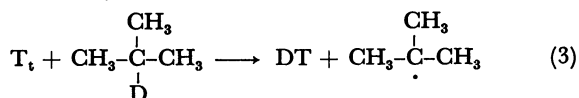
TABLE 1. YIELDS OF TRITIATED PRODUCTS OF THE RECOIL TRITIUM REACTION IN NEOPENTANE AT 77 K

Sample ^{a)}	Irradiation time s	Relative yield/%						DT/HT
		HT	DT	CH ₃ T	RT ^{b)}	P ^{c)}	neo-C ₅ H ₁₁ T	
neo-C ₅ H ₁₂ -i-C ₄ H ₉ D(2)	40	42	1	14	2	4	37	0.020
neo-C ₅ H ₁₂ -i-C ₄ H ₉ D(2)	15	37	2	16	2	4	39	0.055
neo-C ₅ H ₁₂ -i-C ₄ H ₉ D(2)	4	37	2	—	—	—	—	0.056
neo-C ₅ H ₁₂ -i-C ₄ D ₉ H(2)	15	38	1	15	3	4	39	0.029
neo-C ₅ H ₁₂ -C ₃ H ₈ (2)	15	40	—	14	2	6	38	—
neo-C ₅ H ₁₂ -i-C ₄ H ₁₀ (2)-DI(0.5)	15	45	1	14	3	—	37	0.022
neo-C ₅ H ₁₂	15	36	—	15	—	7	42	—

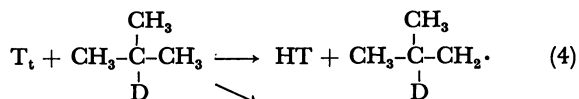
a) The unit of concentration in mol% is shown in parentheses. LiF (0.05 g/l g of solvent) is added to all the samples. The yields at the irradiation time of 15 s are the mean values of three or four runs, and the errors are about 10%. b) RT represents a tritiated solute, such as *i*-C₄H₉T, *i*-C₄D₉T, or C₃H₇T. c) P may be *i*-C₄H₇T. d) Since not all the tritiated products were analyzed in this sample, it is assumed that the yield of hydrogen (HT+DT) is equal to that of neo-C₅H₁₂-i-C₄H₉D(2 mol%) at the irradiation time of 15 s.

0.055 for the irradiation time of 15 s.

Now, we will try to estimate the DT/HT ratio from the previously accepted mechanisms. Though the recoil T atoms have an initial energy of 2.7 MeV, a part of them may continue to lose energy through a series of collisional deactivations to the energy range of the H (or D) atoms produced by the photolysis. The scavenger study showed that about one-third of the total recoil T atoms are deactivated.^{1a,6,7} If the deactivated T atoms (T_t)¹³ behave in a manner similar to that of H (or D) atoms in the photolysis, they should migrate through the neo-C₅H₁₂-i-C₄H₉D mixture and react selectively with the isobutane solute (Reaction 3):⁵

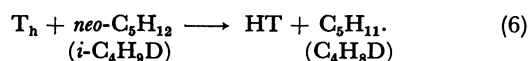


Furthermore, the possibility of the occurrence of Reactions 4 and 5 can be dismissed on the basis of the following results of H-atom reactions in the photolysis:



When H atoms are produced by the photolysis of HI in the neo-C₅H₁₂-i-C₄H₉D mixtures at 77 K, only *t*-C₄H₉ radicals are produced by Reaction 3.^{5b)} The isobutyl or propyl radicals, which should be formed in Reactions 4 and 5, were not observed by ESR spectroscopy in the reaction of H atoms with *i*-C₄H₉D at 77 K. Thus, most of the T_t atoms can be expected to react with *i*-C₄H₉D to form DT by means of Reaction 3.

The amounts of hot T atoms with a high energy (T_h) are about 60–70% of the total-recoil T-atom reactions in alkanes.^{1a,6,7} These T atoms react with alkane by means of abstraction, replacement, and fragmentation reactions. Since the ratio of the D atom to the H atom in the neo-C₅H₁₂-i-C₄H₉D(2 mol%) mixture is only 0.002, the hot T_h atoms in the abstraction reaction react virtually with the H atom to form HT by means of Reaction 6:



Thus, the maximum yield of HT is less than 60–70% of the total tritiated products. The T_t atoms, the amounts of which are about 40–30% of the total recoil T atoms, form DT by means of Reaction 3.

Therefore, the ratio of DT to HT can be expected to be higher than 0.4:

$$\frac{\text{DT}}{\text{HT}} = \frac{40 - 30\%}{\leq 60 - 70\%} \geq 0.4. \quad (7)$$

The expected ratio (DT/HT) does not coincide at all with the experimental value (0.055) in Table 1. The quite low value of the experimental DT yield indicates that most of the T_t atoms neither diffuse into the neopentane matrix at 77 K nor abstract D atoms selectively from *i*-C₄H₉D.

Hot-zone Model for Recoil-T-atom Reactions. If the thermalization process of recoil-T atoms in the solid phase is approximately the same as that in the gas phase, the question arises of why the thermalized recoil T_t atoms do not diffuse into the neopentane matrix at 77 K. The hot-zone model, proposed previously by Seitz *et al.*,¹⁴ Harbottle *et al.*,¹⁵ and others,¹⁶ gives a hypothetical explanation for this question. The ratios of the rate constants ($k_{i\text{-C}_4\text{H}_9\text{D}}/k_{\text{neo-C}_5\text{H}_{12}}$) for hydrogen-atom

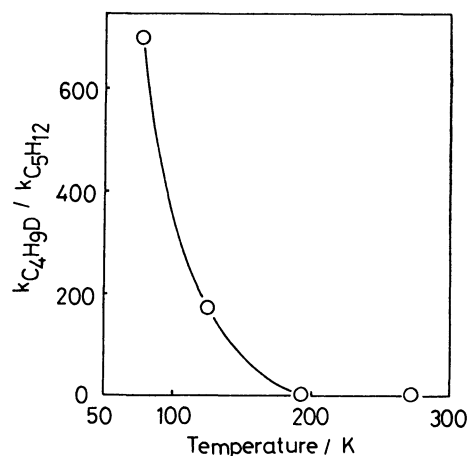


Fig. 3. Temperature effect of rate constants ($k_{\text{solute}}/k_{\text{solvent}}$) for hydrogen atom abstraction by hydrogen atom produced by the UV-photolysis of neo-C₅H₁₂-i-C₄H₉D(2 mol%)–HI(0.5 mol%) mixture. The values are estimated from the results of previous papers.^{5b,5d)}

abstraction by H atoms in the photolysis of *neo*-C₅H₁₂-*i*-C₄H₉D-HI mixtures were determined previously,^{5b,5d} and they are summarized in Fig. 3. The ratio of the rate constants, which represents the selectivity of the abstraction reaction, decreases drastically with an increase in the temperature. The selective hydrogen-atom-abstraction reaction in a neopentane matrix is suppressed at temperatures higher than 140 K, which is the transition point of solid neopentane.

A recoil-T atom produces a "track," *i.e.* "continuous spurs," around its trajectory. If the temperature of the track is much higher than 77 K and the T atom reacts in its track, the T_t atom does not abstract a D atom selectively from solute *i*-C₄H₉D, but it may react with solvent *neo*-C₅H₁₂ and free radicals in the track.

We can estimate the size of a hot zone from the negative temperature effect on the selective hydrogen-atom-abstraction reaction. A cylindrical hot-zone model is used for a high-LET track produced by a recoil T atom. The excess temperature distribution (T_{ex}) in space (r) and time (t) is given for this geometry by:

$$T_{ex} = T_0(1 + 4\delta t/r_0^2)^{-1} \exp[-r^2/(r_0^2 + 4\delta t)], \quad (8)$$

where T_0 is the initial temperature excess on the track axis and where r is the distance from it.¹⁷⁾ The quantity r_0 denotes the size parameter of the track cylinder, where $0.56 r_0$ corresponds to the mean radius of the track. If S denotes the energy loss per unit length, then T_0 is given by the equation $T_0 = S/(\pi \rho c r_0^2)$, where ρ and c are the density and the specific heat of the solid. Equation 8 is, in principle, the same as that proposed by Seitz *et al.*¹⁴⁾ except that the size of the initial track is considered according to the method of Mozumder.¹⁷⁾ The quantity δ , called the thermal diffusivity, equals $\kappa/\rho c$, where κ denotes the heat conductivity.

Recently the experimental and theoretical results on the stopping powers and path lengths of hydrogen and helium have been summarized by Ziegler.¹⁸⁾ The path lengths of the D atom and the ⁴He atom with 1 keV through carbon are 160 Å and 100 Å respectively. It is assumed here that the length of the T atom with 1 keV through hydrocarbon is 130 Å. Thus, the average stopping power (S) is 7.7 eV Å⁻¹. The heat conductivity (κ), the specific heat (c), and the density (ρ) of solid neopentane at 77 K are 1.4×10^{-3} J s⁻¹ cm⁻¹ deg⁻¹,¹⁹⁾ 0.80 J g⁻¹ deg⁻¹,²⁰⁾ and 0.72 g cm⁻³ respectively. According to the experimental and theoretical studies of radiation chemistry, the radii of the track produced by β -rays are about 15 Å in water¹⁷⁾ and 25 Å in methanol²¹⁾ respectively. Thus, two values of 20 and 40 Å are tentatively taken here for the size parameters of the track (r_0). Since the selective hydrogen-atom-abstraction reaction in the *neo*-C₅H₁₂-*i*-C₄H₉D mixture is suppressed at 140 K (*cf.* Fig. 3), the lower limit of the temperature of the hot zone is assumed to be 140 K. Then, $T_{ex} = 140 - 77 = 63$ K. If the excess temperature (T_{ex}) at the boundary of the hot zone is 63 K, the radius (r) of the hot zone can be calculated by Eq. 8 as a function of the duration time (t).

Figure 4 shows the size of the hot zone. The maximum radius and the duration time of the hot zone are found to be ≈ 60 Å and $\approx 10^{-10}$ s respectively, both of which values are roughly independent of the initial size

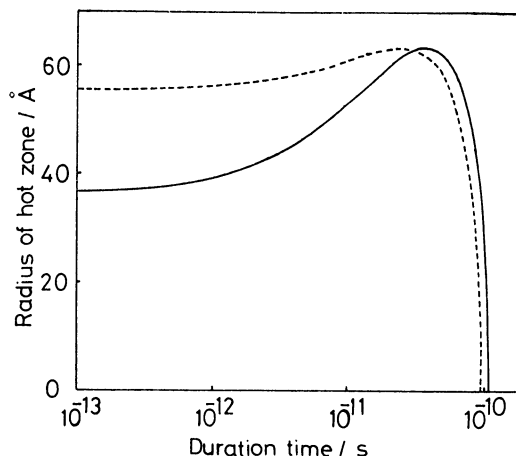


Fig. 4. Time dependence of hot zone produced by recoil T atom in solid neopentane.

—, A size parameter (r_0) of a track is 20 Å.
 ·····, A size parameter (r_0) of a track is 40 Å.

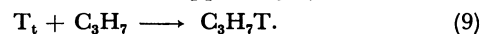
parameter (r_0) of the track. The radius increases with an increase in the duration time from 10^{-13} s to 3×10^{-11} s, and then decreases drastically at 10^{-10} s. The increase in the radius is caused by the diffusion of the initial energy deposited by a recoil T atom. The subsequent drastic decrease in the radius is due to the cooling of the hot zone. Most of the recoil T atoms may react in this hot zone within $\approx 10^{-10}$ s, while only a few of them diffuse out of the zone.

Amount of T Atoms Leaking out of the Hot Zone.

Though most of the recoil T atoms react in the hot zone, some of them may diffuse out of the zone. Now, we will attempt to estimate the upper limit of T_t atoms which may leak out of the zone. Table 1 shows the volatile tritiated products in the neopentane system. As no polymeric products are produced in a butane system,²⁾ most of the activity in the neopentane system may also appear in a volatile form. Thus, the yields in Table 1 represent roughly the overall reaction products.

The most possible reaction of the T_t atoms which diffuse out of the hot zone is a selective hydrogen-atom-abstraction reaction with the alkane solute in the neopentane matrix at 77 K. For example, the T_t atom reacts with *i*-C₄H₉D in the *neo*-C₅H₁₂-*i*-C₄H₉D (2 mol %) mixture to form DT (Reaction 3). The DT yield, however, amounts to only 2% of the total tritiated products.

There is a possibility that T_t atoms may migrate through the matrix and recombine with trapped radicals produced by the radiolysis of the sample. In order to examine this possibility, the reaction of T atoms has been studied in the *neo*-C₅H₁₂-C₃H₈ (2 mol %) system. The ESR measurements of this mixture, after it has been γ -irradiated at 77 K, verified the production of a large amount of C₃H₇ radicals. If the C₃H₇ radicals are also produced by reactor-irradiation, the T_t atoms would recombine with the trapped C₃H₇ radicals.



The yield of C₃H₇T is only 2% of the total tritiated products (*cf.* Table 1). Since C₃H₇T may also be formed by the substitution reaction of hot T atoms with

C_3H_8 , the amount of T atoms which recombine with the trapped C_3H_7 radicals is much less than 2%.

There is also the additional possibility that the T_t atoms react with the trapped radicals by means of a disproportionation reaction. The disproportionation reaction between an H atom and a butyl radical occurs at such a low temperature as 90 K.²²⁾ The ESR measurement of the γ -irradiated *neo*- C_5H_{12} -*i*- C_4D_9H (2 mol %) mixture shows the predominant formation of C_4D_9 radicals. It is expected that the C_4D_9 radicals are also produced by the reactor-irradiation. If the T_t atoms migrate through the *neo*- C_5H_{12} -*i*- C_4D_9H mixtures at 77 K and react with the trapped C_4D_9 radicals by means of the disproportionation reaction, DT should be formed by Reaction 10:

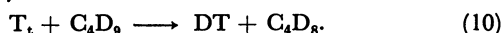


Table 1 shows that the yield of DT is only 1% of the total tritiated products.

The effect of a radical scavenger, such as DI, has also been studied in the *neo*- C_5H_{12} -*i*- C_4H_{10} -DI mixtures at 77 K. It is expected that the T_t atoms may react with DI, with the resultant formation of DT:

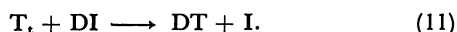


Table 1 shows that the yield of DT is only 1% of the total tritiated yield. This result also indicates that the amount of the diffusively mobile T atoms may be quite small.

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