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Multi-Stage Axial Compressor with Counter-Rotation Using Accessory Drive

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(54) **MULTI-STAGE AXIAL COMPRESSOR WITH COUNTER-ROTATION USING ACCESSORY DRIVE**

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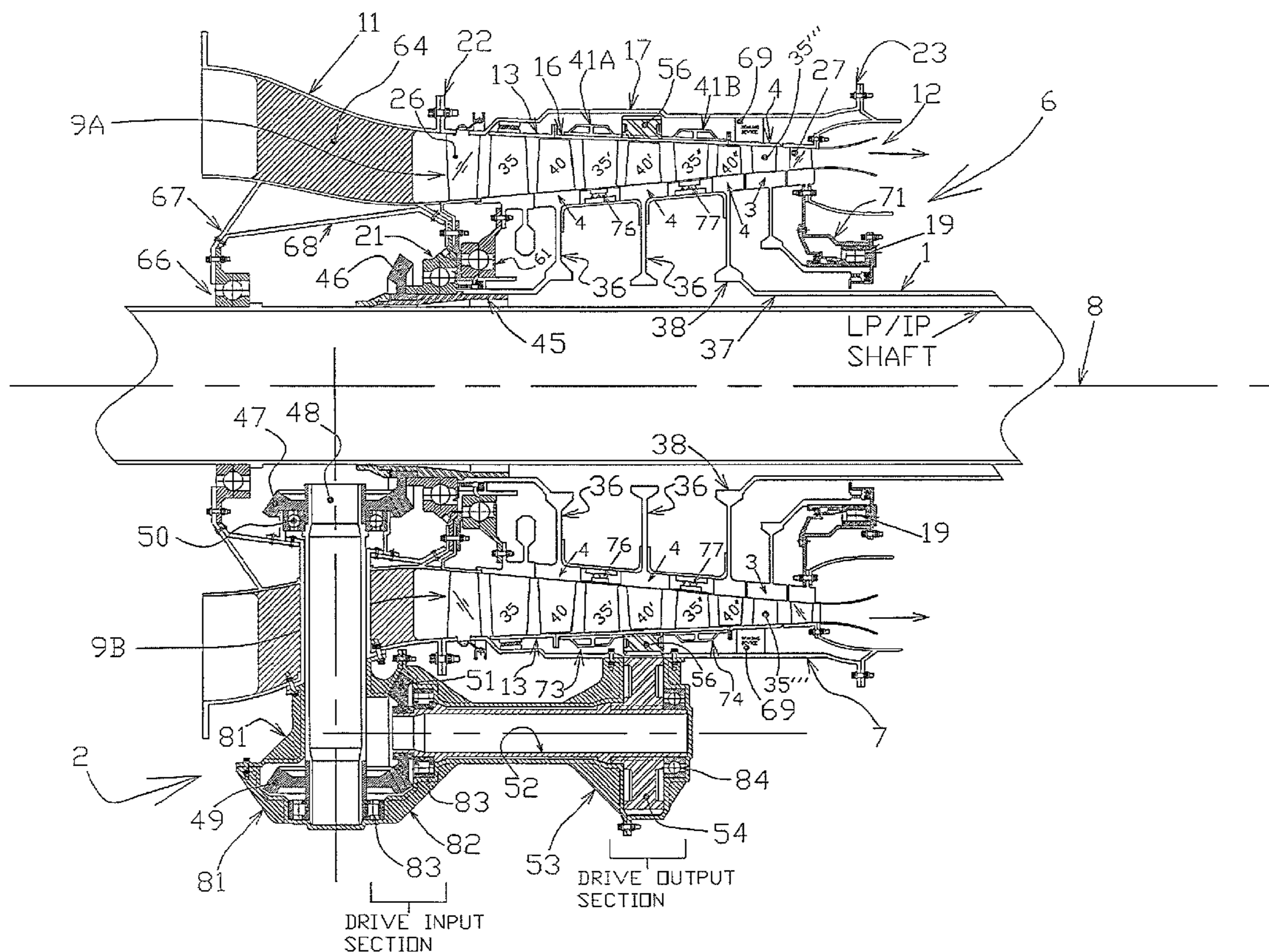
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(60) Provisional application No. 61/610,047, filed on Mar. 13, 2012.

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A multi-stage axial compressor for counter rotation. A first series of rotor blade assemblies are mounted on and rotate with the driveshaft, each rotor blade assembly of the first series comprising a rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor. A second series of rotor blade assemblies provide a counter-rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor. An accessory drive links the second series of rotor blade assemblies to the driveshaft and causes counter-rotation of the second series of rotor blade assemblies.



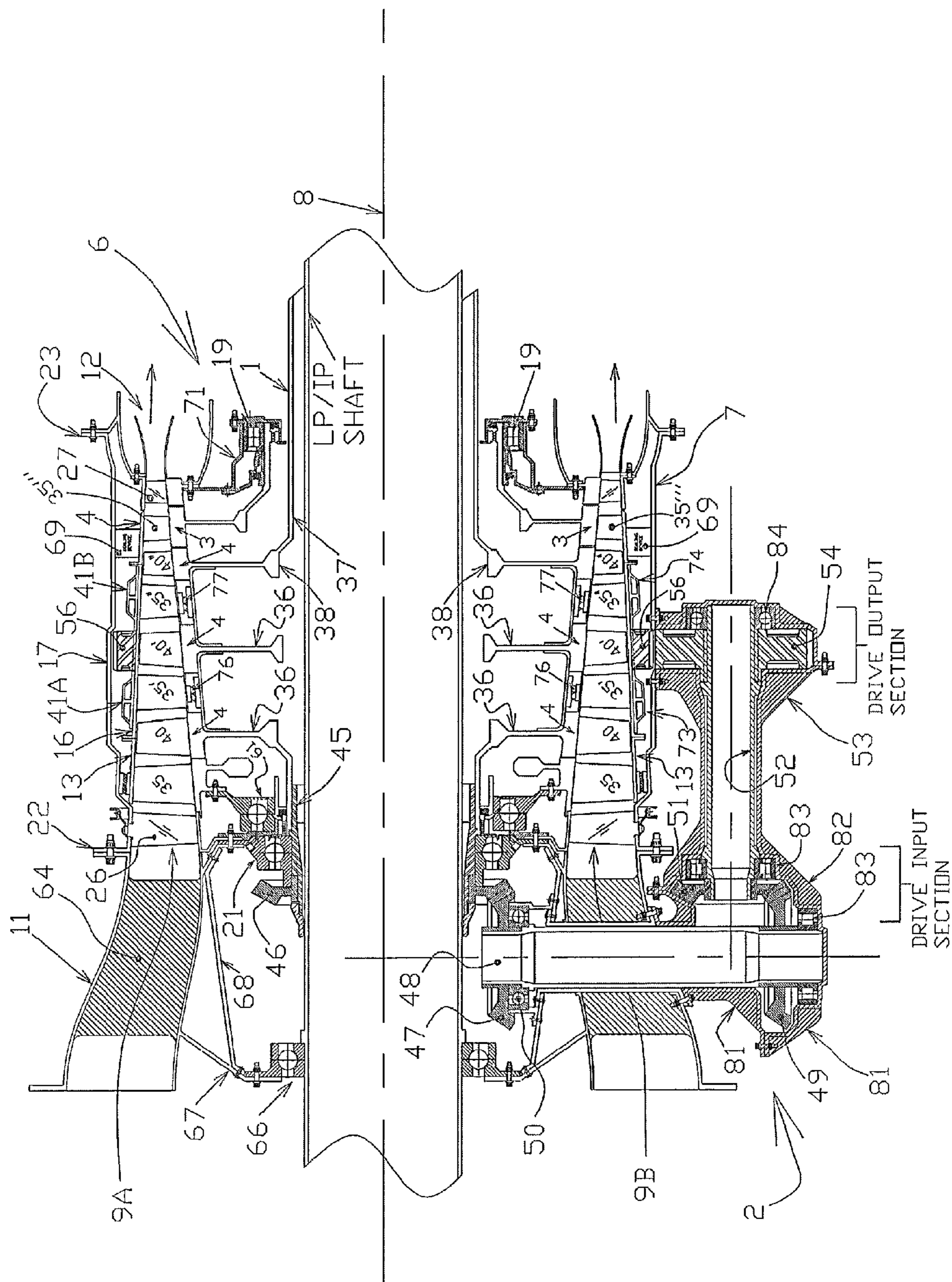


Fig.1

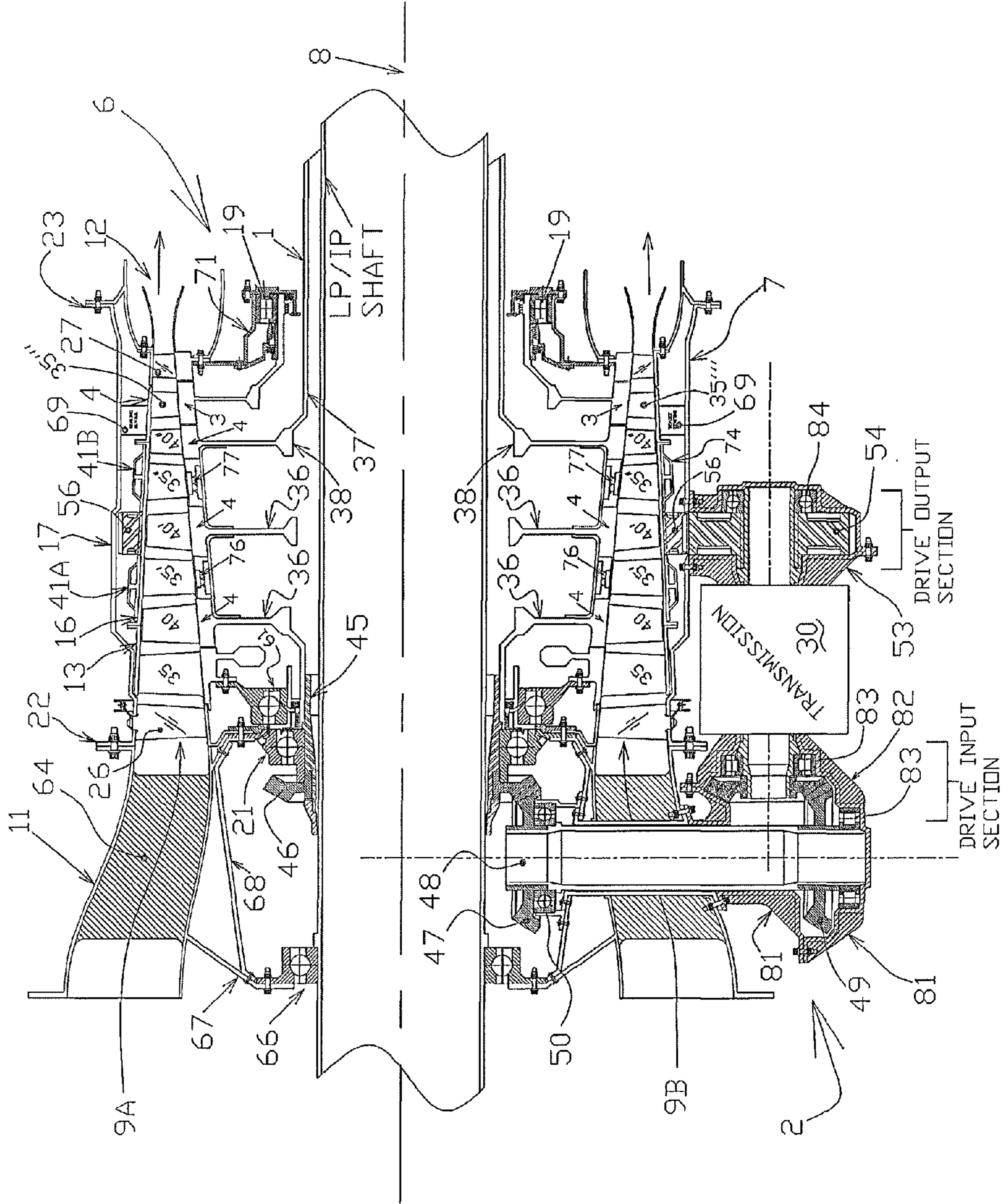


Fig. 2

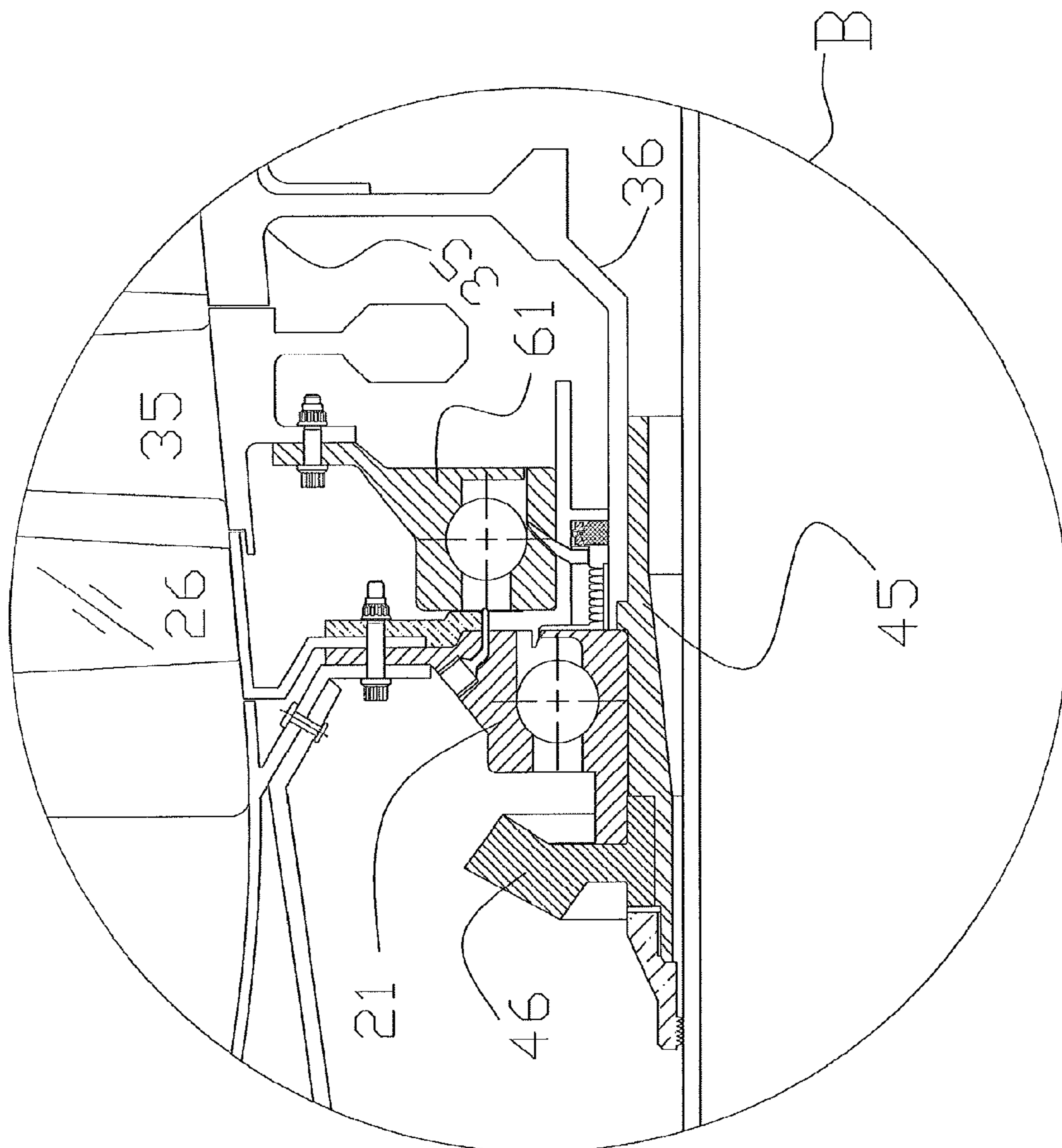


Fig. 3

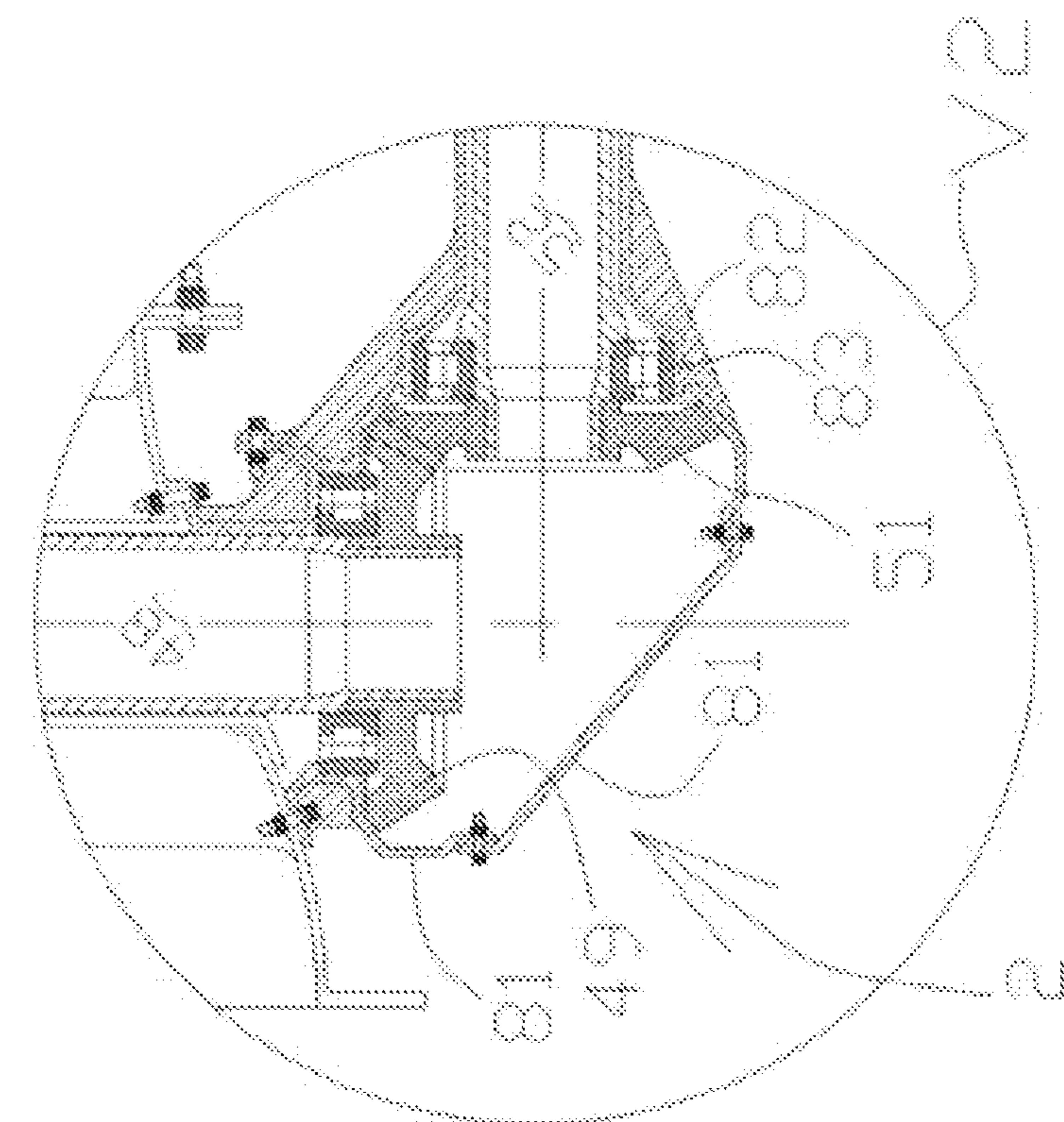


FIG. 4B

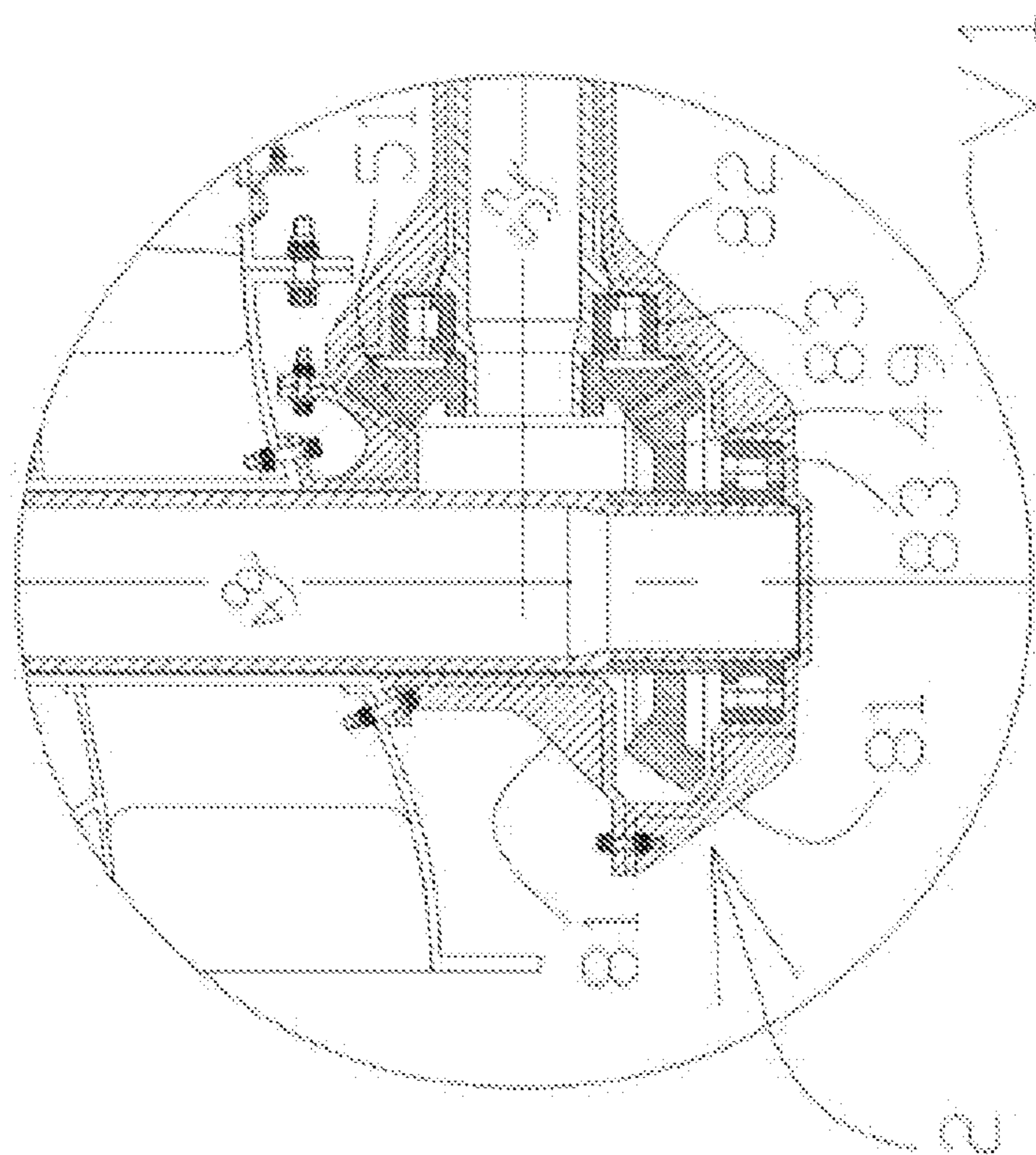
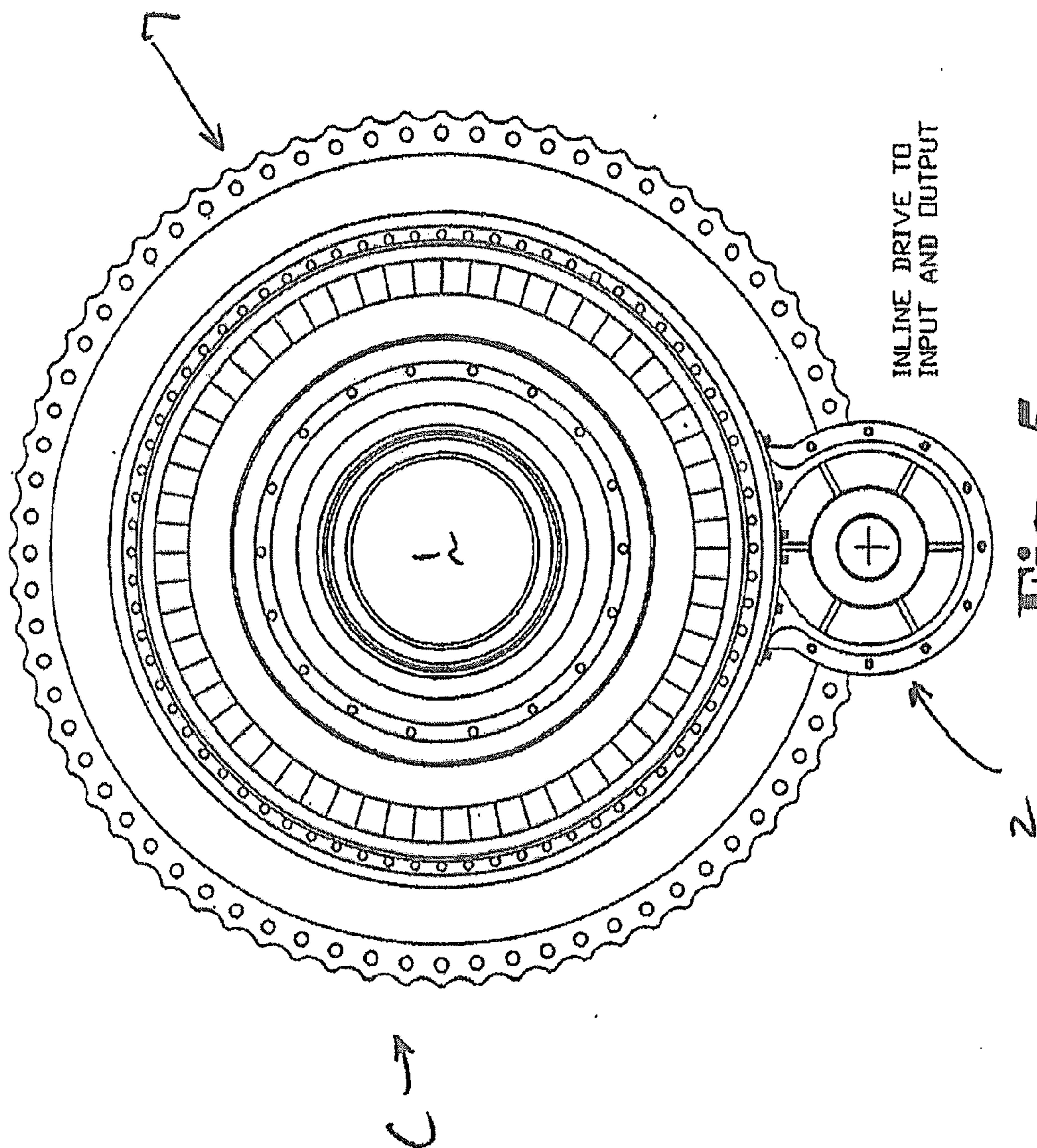
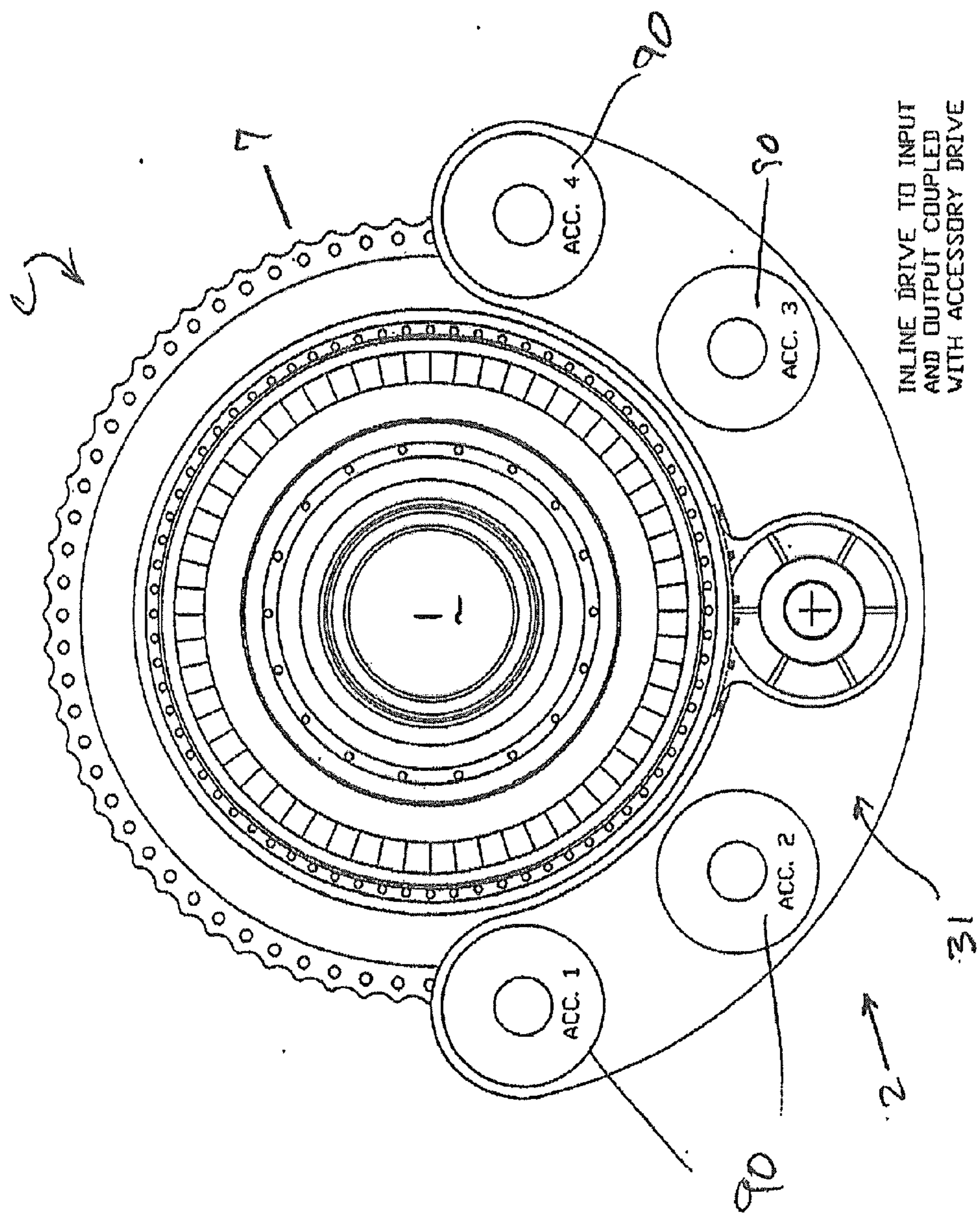


FIG. 4A



INLINE DRIVE TO
INPUT AND OUTPUT

Fig. 5



INLINE DRIVE TO INPUT
AND OUTPUT COUPLED
WITH ACCESSORY DRIVE

Fig. 6

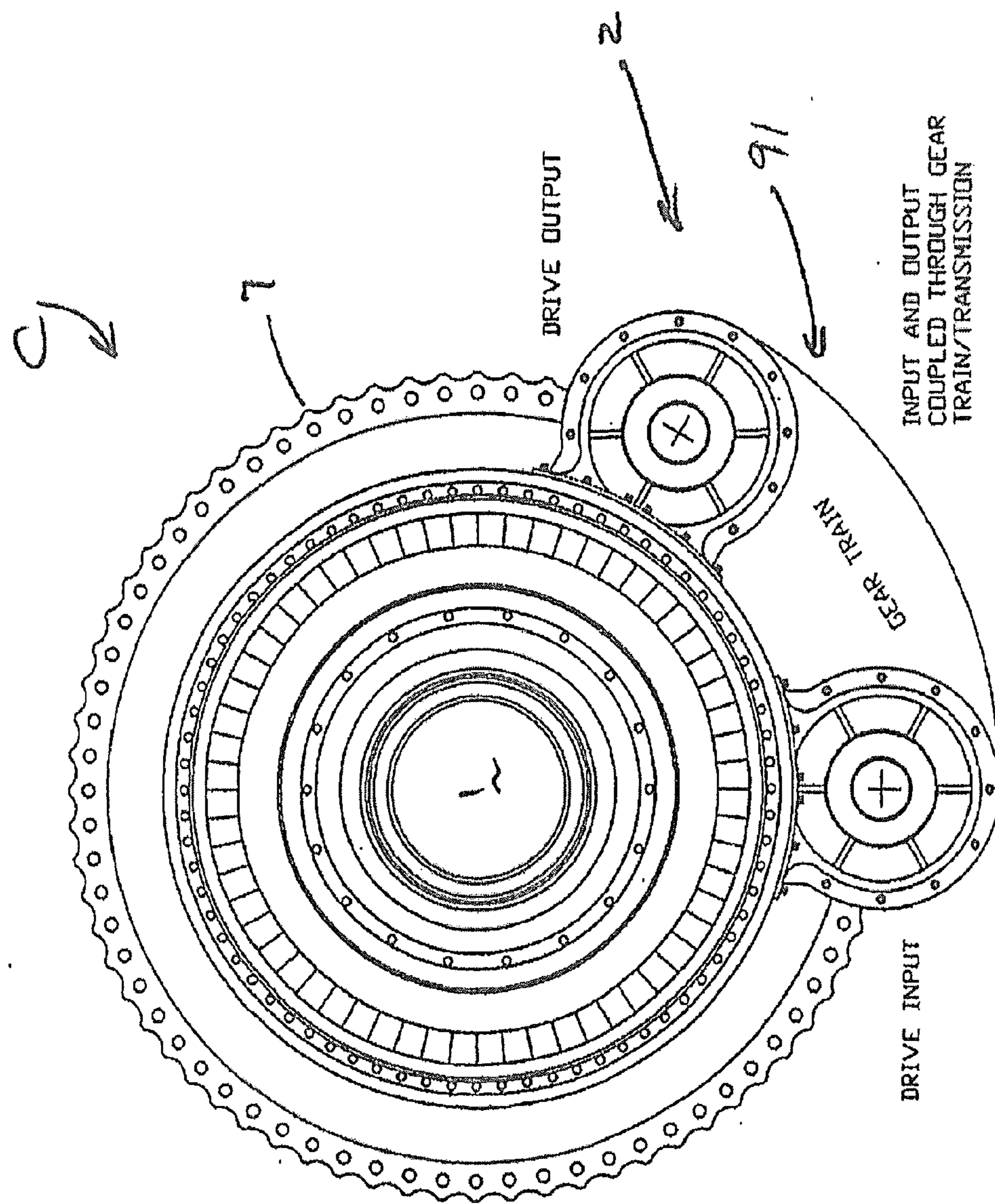


FIG. 7

**MULTI-STAGE AXIAL COMPRESSOR WITH
COUNTER-ROTATION USING ACCESSORY
DRIVE**

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED
APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/610,047, filed Mar. 13, 2012. The specification and drawings of the provisional patent application are specifically incorporated by reference herein. This application is related to co-pending and commonly assigned U.S. application Ser. No. 13/768,252, filed Feb. 15, 2013 which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/600,002 and U.S. Provisional Application No. 61/600,006, both filed Feb. 17, 2012.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] Embodiments of the invention generally relate to axial compressors, and in particular to axial compressors incorporating rotating and sequential counter-rotating stages using an accessory drive to enable operation of the rotating and counter-rotating stages off a single driveshaft.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Axial compressors generally are designed to produce a substantially continuous flow of compressed gas or intake air passing therethrough to boost the power of gas turbine engines, such as jet engines for aircraft, high-speed ship engines, as well as some automotive reciprocating engines. In general, most axial compressors will include a series of airfoils, vanes or blades arranged in stages that include pairs of rotating and stationary airfoils. As an air flow enters the inlet of the compressor, the rotating airfoils (rotors) drive the air forwardly through the compressor, increasing the kinetic energy thereof, while the stationary or static airfoils (stators) diffuse the increased kinetic energy of the air flow passing thereover, causing a rise in pressure of the air flow. As a result, the pressure of the axial air flow through the compressor is significantly increased as it passes through multiple stages of the compressor.

[0004] However, the pressures and efficiencies provided by axial compressors can be limited by size and weight of the compressor. For example, in aircraft where minimizing compressor size and weight is critical to provide a lower profile, higher stage pressure ratios generated by such smaller compressors typically are provided at the expense of reduced compressor efficiency, especially as airflow speeds approach high Mach numbers. Attempts have been made to design compressors with counter-rotation to try to increase the efficiency, while reducing the size and number of axial compressors. One problem with such counter-rotating compressors has traditionally been that the blades of such counter-rotating compressors generally have been required to be on different driveshafts, which adds to the weight and complexity of the compressors, as well as potentially creating problems with synchronizing the operation of the counter-rotating blades, which further increases with an increased number of stages of the compressor. Additionally, in such systems, thrust loads can be transmitted from the compressor driveshaft(s) to the vanes or airfoils connected thereto, thus subjecting such vanes to additional wear and stresses that can affect their operating life.

SUMMARY

[0005] The embodiments disclosed are directed to axial compressors incorporating rotating and sequential counter-rotating stages using an accessory drive to enable operation of the rotating and counter-rotating stages off a single drive-shaft.

[0006] In one embodiment, a multi-stage axial compressor for counter rotation includes a driveshaft; a first series of rotor blade assemblies mounted on and rotating with the driveshaft, each rotor blade assembly of the first series comprising a rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor; a second series of rotor blade assemblies, each rotor blade assembly of the second series comprising a counter-rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor; and an accessory drive linking the second series of rotor blade assemblies to the driveshaft and causing counter-rotation of the second series of rotor blade assemblies.

[0007] In another embodiment, a multi-stage axial compressor for counter rotation includes a driveshaft; a compressor housing including a rotating inner casing and a static outer casing; a first series of rotor blade assemblies mounted on and rotating with the driveshaft, each rotor blade assembly of the first series comprising a rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor; a second series of rotor blade assemblies mounted on the rotating inner casing, each rotor blade assembly of the second series comprising a counter-rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor; and an accessory drive connecting the second series of rotor blade assemblies to the driveshaft and causing counter-rotation of the second series of rotor blade assemblies.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0008] These and other advantages and aspects of the embodiments of the disclosure will become apparent and more readily appreciated from the following detailed description of the embodiments taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, as follows.

[0009] FIG. 1 is a side elevational view, taken in cross-section, of one embodiment of an axial compressor with rotating and sequentially counter-rotating vanes driven by an accessory drive according to the principles of the present invention.

[0010] FIG. 2 is a side elevational view, taken in cross-section, illustrating an alternative embodiment of an axial compressor with rotating and sequentially counter-rotating vanes driven by an accessory drive and a transmission assembly according to the present invention.

[0011] FIG. 3 is a side elevational view, taken in cross-section, illustrating the forward compression drum/case bearing support assembly for the axial compressor.

[0012] FIGS. 4A-4B are side elevational views, taken in cross-section, illustrating alternative exemplary embodiments of gear pairings for the accessory drive.

[0013] FIG. 5 is an end view of the axial compressor with the accessory drive.

[0014] FIG. 6 is an end view of an alternative embodiment of the axial compressor with the accessory drive including a gear box transmission.

[0015] FIG. 7 is an end view of another embodiment of the axial compressor with the accessory drive including a drive train transmission for driving the counter-rotating vanes.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0016] The following detailed description is provided as an enabling teaching of embodiments of the invention. Those skilled in the relevant art will recognize that many changes can be made to the embodiments described, while still obtaining the beneficial results. It will also be apparent that some of the desired benefits of the embodiments described can be obtained by selecting some of the features of the embodiments without utilizing other features. Accordingly, those who work in the art will recognize that many modifications and adaptations to the embodiments described are possible and may even be desirable in certain circumstances. Thus, the following description is provided as illustrative of the principles of the invention and not in limitation thereof, since the scope of the invention is defined by the claims,

[0017] This application is related to co-pending and commonly assigned U.S. application Ser. No. 13/768,252. The co-pending application discloses embodiments of multi-stage axial compressors incorporating counter-rotating stages capable of being operated off a single driveshaft. A first series of rotor blade assemblies are mounted on and rotate with the driveshaft, each rotor blade assembly comprising a rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor. A second series of rotor blade assemblies are mounted on the driveshaft, each rotor blade assembly comprising a counter-rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor and is connected to the first series of rotor blade assemblies by at least one planetary gear assembly for causing counter-rotation of the second series of rotor blade assemblies. This co-pending patent application is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety into this description.

[0018] Referring now to the drawings in greater detail in which like numerals indicate like parts throughout the several views, FIGS. 1-7 generally illustrate exemplary embodiments of an axial compressor for an engine with sequentially counter-rotating rotor or airfoil assemblies driven off of a single, substantially centrally-aligned driveshaft 1. In the embodiments illustrated, a solution is presented to implementing sequential counter-rotation in a multi-stage axial compressor C, and which, as noted, further incorporates an accessory drive system 2 for driving counter-rotating rotor assemblies 3 in a direction counter to or opposite from rotor assemblies 4 driven directly and in the same rotary direction as the driveshaft 1, with thrust loads associated with the driving of the rotor assemblies 4 and counter-rotating rotor assemblies 3 transferred to the engine frame. In the illustrated embodiments, the counter-rotation for the axial compressor C is achieved using a single driveshaft 1, typically being driven or torqued by a turbine (not shown) associated with the compressor as part of the engine, such as for aircraft.

[0019] As illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, the axial compressor C generally includes an elongated, tubular body 6 having a compressor case or housing 7 that surrounds and extends along the driveshaft 1 about a central axis 8. Airflow paths indicated by arrows 9A and 9B in FIGS. 1-2, are defined through the compressor on opposite sides of the driveshaft 1, with each of the airflow paths extending from an inlet 11 along a longitudinally extending path to an outlet or discharge end 12, along which the flow of air moving along such pathways 9A and 9B is compressed by the axial compressor so as to substantially increase the pressure of the airflow as the airflow passes through each of the rotating and counter-rotating rotor assemblies 4/3 of the stages 13 of the compressor C.

[0020] The case or housing 7 of the compressor C typically can include two sections or parts, including a rotating inner case or drum housing 16 to which the counter-rotating rotor assemblies 3 are mounted so as to be carried/rotated thereby, and a static outer case or drum housing 17 generally connected to the inner case 16 by bearings 18 to support the inner case while also enabling rotation thereof. The static outer case further will be connected to and supported on the driveshaft 1 by bearings 19/21 as indicated in FIGS. 1-2. Fore and aft flanges 22 and 23 can be mounted to/or formed with the compressor case 17. These fore and aft flanges generally assist in the connection of the compressor to other engine components, such as an intermediate pressure compressor (IPC), diffuser/combustor and other engine components, as will be understood by those skilled in the art. The flanges 22 and 23 further can connect and secure a fixed inlet stator guide vane (IGV) 26 and a fixed outlet stator guide vane (OGV) 27, respectively, at the fore (inlet) 11 and aft (outlet) ends 12 of the compressor. The inlet and outlet guide vanes generally will be substantially fixed in place and typically will be oriented at a desired stagger angle selected to meet desired operating conditions of the compressor, and it will be understood that such stagger angles for the inlet and outlet guide vanes further can be varied as needed depending upon the desired operating conditions of the compressor.

[0021] In the illustrated embodiments of FIGS. 1-2, the compressor driveshaft 1 generally will be connected directly to each of the first series or set of rotating rotor or airfoil assemblies 4 so as to directly drive these rotating rotor assemblies 4 in the same direction as the rotation of the driveshaft 1. For example, if the driveshaft is driven in a generally clockwise direction, the first, rotating airfoil assemblies likewise will be driven in a clockwise direction, whereas if the driveshaft is rotated in a counter-clockwise direction, the rotor assemblies 4 generally also will be driven in a counter-clockwise direction. The second series or set of rotor or airfoil assemblies 3 are provided as counter-rotating airfoil assemblies, and will be rotated in an opposite direction to the first series or set of rotating rotor assemblies 4 and the driveshaft being driven in a counter-rotating movement by the drive assembly 2 in response to the rotation of the driveshaft. This second series or set of counter-rotating airfoil assemblies further can be rotated at different or varied speeds with respect to the first series of rotating airfoil assemblies such as by the use of a gear box transmission 30, as shown in FIG. 2 and/or other alternative gearing drive arrangements 31-32, as shown in FIGS. 6-7.

[0022] As FIGS. 1 and 2 further illustrate, the rotating rotor or airfoil assemblies 4 each generally will include a rotor blade 35 arranged at a desired stagger angle and attached to or formed with an inwardly projecting support member or disc 36. Each of the inwardly projecting support members or discs 36 of the rotating rotor assemblies 4 further can be attached to the driveshaft either directly or via a connector spline/flange 37 to a coupling or compressor disc 38, which connects the rotor assemblies 4 to the driveshaft such as by fasteners, such as rivets, bolts, or by welding, etc., so as to be directly driven by the rotation of the driveshaft 1, as will be understood by those skilled in the art. Alternatively, the support discs 36 of the rotating airfoil assemblies 4 could be integrally formed with the driveshaft, such as by extrusion, or could be otherwise fixedly secured to the driveshaft by welding, etc.

[0023] As additionally shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, the second or counter-rotating airfoil assemblies 3 generally will be

mounted to the inner rotating case or drum housing **16**, and can be indirectly connected or linked to the driveshaft **1** by the accessory drive system **2** in order to drive the counter-rotating airfoil assemblies **3** in an opposite direction counter to the rotation of the driveshaft **1** and rotating airfoil assemblies **4**. Each of the counter-rotating airfoil assemblies **3** can have a similar design and/or construction to that of the rotating airfoil assemblies **21**, including an airfoil blade or vane **40**, connected to the drum housing or case **16** as indicated at **41A-41B**.

[0024] In one embodiment, the preliminary power for the accessory drive system **2** for the compressor comes from the driveshaft **1** which is torqued by a turbine assembly associated therewith. The airfoil or rotor blades labeled **35**, **35'**, **35"** and **35'''** of the rotating airfoil assemblies **4** that are directly connected to the driveshaft **1** by flanges/discs, which are additionally splined and connected to a coupling **45** (FIG. 3), which coupling **45** is further connected to a first bevel gear **46** of the accessory drive system **2**.

[0025] As illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2, the accessory drive system **2** generally includes the first bevel gear **46** which engages with a second bevel gear **47** on the opposite side of the driveshaft **48**, supported by bearings **50**. The torque from bevel gear **46** is transferred to bevel gear **49** through shaft **48**, and as bevel gear **49** engages with gears **51** arranged about a secondary driveshaft **52** so that the torque is transferred to a spur gear assembly **53** through the secondary shaft **52**. The spur gear assembly **53** includes a first spur or helical gear **54** that engages with and drives a second spur gear **56** which sits on the inner casing **46**. The transfer of torque through this mechanism causes the inner casing **16** to rotate counter to the compressor drum and driveshaft **1**, thus causing blades **40**, **40'** and **40"** to counter rotate with blades **35**, **35'**, and **35"**. It should be noted that the angle between gear axis of the first and second bevel gears **46** and **47** and the gears **49** and **51** gearing pairs need not be exactly 90 degrees, but can be adjusted to meet design requirements.

[0026] The thrust load developed by the compressor drum is transferred to the engine frame via a thrust bearing assembly **21**. Similarly, thrust loading produced by the rotating case is transferred to the engine frame through a bearing assembly **61**. The rotating case is also radially supported on its aft end by roller bearing **19**. As shown in FIG. 1, bearings **21** and **61** transfer thrust loads to engine frame via an aerodynamic strut **64**. Thrust loadings from the secondary or low pressure shaft **52** (if applicable) can also be transferred to this strut **64** via a thrust bearing **66** as shown in FIG. 1, which is connected to flanges **67** and **68**.

[0027] Elements **69**, indicated in FIGS. 1-2 are case air seals, which prevent the leakage of pressurized air from the aft of the compressor to cavity between the rotating case and the support structure. Additional seals also have been displayed, although their location, placement, etc., can be varied. For example, inter-stage air seals **76** and **77** also can be provided along rotating airfoil assemblies **4** as indicated in FIG. 1.

[0028] At the end of the compressor, the OGV also acts as a load-bearing device, carrying radial loads from bearing **21** via flange **71**. In use of the compressor as a HPC, then the OGV also can be connected to an exit diffuser and burner flanges as shown. The IGV similarly helps in correcting air incidences at off design conditions. The IGV can swivel with

the help of a control horn. Additional struts **73/74** further can be provided to withstand compression loads from counter-rotating vanes **40** and **40'**.

[0029] Parts **81** and **82** form the housing for the gear pairs. The section where the bevel part **82** engages with bevel gear **51** is called the drive INPUT section and similarly the section where the spur or helical gear **54** mates with the spur gear **56** of the inner casing **16** is called the drive OUTPUT section. Support bearings **83** and **84** provide support for the gears and secondary driveshaft of the accessory drive system.

[0030] FIG. 2 shows an embodiment where the additional transmission or gear box/gear reducer mechanism **30** could be placed around the secondary shaft **52**. It will be understood that the transmission could be arranged in other locations as needed to provide additional freedom of design of the compressor of the present invention.

[0031] FIG. 3 shows an enlarged/detailed view of the forward case/compression drum bearing **21** and coupling support arrangement **45**.

[0032] FIG. 4 shows different potential embodiments for possible arrangements of the gear pairs **49** and **83**.

[0033] FIG. 5 shows a rear view of the compressor with the accessory drive system **2** in a direct drive/in-line type arrangement.

[0034] FIG. 6 shows an embodiment where the accessory drive system **2** could be incorporated with an accessory gear-box **30** including multiple gears **90** for varying the speed at which the counter-rotating vanes are driven.

[0035] FIG. 7 shows an embodiment where the transmission **30** is replaced with a gear train **95** and the input and output drive sections that are not concentric.

[0036] As a result, the structure of the disclosed embodiments provide for an axial compressor that incorporates sequential counter-rotation of selected airfoil blades/vanes, driven off a single driveshaft, without requiring stator vanes to assist in the management and control of high tip Mach numbers and incidence angles of the airflows passing through the compressor as can occur with such counter-rotating structures. The disclosed embodiments further provides greater flexibility to the design of the compressor to enable faster or slower counter-rotation as needed depending upon the design and operational requirements of the compressor and engine in which the compressor is employed. Accordingly, from an aerodynamic standpoint, the rotating and counter-rotating airfoil assemblies can be provided with their own speed or RPMs, enabling the custom designing of a more optimal aerodynamic operation of the compressor based upon desired/necessary performance requirements, while from a mechanical standpoint, the use of separate epicyclic gear assemblies driving each of the counter-rotating airfoil assemblies enables the counter-rotating and rotating airfoil assemblies to be decoupled such that if there is a problem with engine vibrations being transmitted through the compressor, such vibrations will not be transmitted to all the airfoil structures of the compressor.

[0037] The corresponding structures, materials, acts, and equivalents of all means plus function elements in any claims below are intended to include any structure, material, or acts for performing the function in combination with other claims elements as specifically claimed.

[0038] Those skilled in the art will appreciate that many modifications to the exemplary embodiments are possible without departing from the scope of the present invention. In addition, it is possible to use some of the features of the

embodiments disclosed without the corresponding use of the other features. Accordingly, the foregoing description of the exemplary embodiments is provided for the purpose of illustrating the principles of the invention, and not in limitation thereof, since the scope of the invention is defined solely by the appended claims.

1. A multi-stage axial compressor comprising:
 - a driveshaft;
 - a first series of rotor blade assemblies mounted on and rotating with the driveshaft, each rotor blade assembly of the first series comprising a rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor;
 - a second series of rotor blade assemblies, each rotor blade assembly of the second series comprising a counter-rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor; and
 - an accessory drive linking the second series of rotor blade assemblies to the driveshaft and causing counter-rotation of the second series of rotor blade assemblies.
2. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 1 further comprising a compressor housing including a rotating inner casing to which the second series of rotor blade assemblies are mounted, and a static outer casing supported on the driveshaft by a plurality of bearings.
3. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 2 wherein the accessory drive is mounted external to the compressor housing and comprises a first accessory shaft and a second accessory shaft.
4. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 3 wherein the accessory drive comprises a first bevel gear and a second bevel gear, the first bevel gear engaging with the second bevel gear mounted on an opposite side of the first accessory shaft.
5. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 1 further comprising at least one flange for directly connecting the first series of rotor blade assemblies to the driveshaft.
6. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 1 further comprising a coupling for connecting the first series of rotor blade assemblies to the accessory drive.
7. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 4 further comprising a third bevel gear which engages with a plurality of gears arranged about the second accessory shaft.
8. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 7 further comprising a spur gear assembly connected to the second accessory shaft for receiving torque transferred from the plurality of gears arranged about the second accessory shaft.
9. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 8 wherein the spur gear assembly comprises a spur or helical gear that engages a second spur gear through the second accessory shaft.
10. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 9 wherein the second spur gear is mounted on the inner casing, the spur gear assembly transferring torque to cause the inner casing to rotate counter to a compressor drum and driveshaft.
11. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 1 wherein each rotor blade assembly in the first series comprises a plurality of rotor blades arranged at a predetermined stagger angle and attached to, or formed with, an inwardly projecting support member, each support member connected to the driveshaft by a connector spline or flange.
12. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 5 wherein the flange connects a plurality of engine components to the compressor.
13. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 5 further comprising inlet and outlet axial guide vanes mounted on the axial compressor, the inlet guide vanes mounted at a fore end

of the axial compressor preceding the first and second series of rotor blade assemblies, the outlet guide vanes mounted at an aft end of the axial compressor following the first and second series of rotor blade assemblies.

14. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 10 further comprising a thrust bearing for transferring a thrust load generated by the compressor drum to an engine frame by an aerodynamic strut.
15. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 1 further comprising a plurality of case air seals to prevent leakage of pressurized air from an aft section of the compressor to a cavity between the rotating inner case and support structure.
16. A multi-stage axial compressor comprising:
 - a driveshaft;
 - a compressor housing including a rotating inner casing and a static outer casing;
 - a first series of rotor blade assemblies mounted on and rotating with the driveshaft, each rotor blade assembly of the first series comprising a rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor;
 - a second series of rotor blade assemblies mounted on the rotating inner casing, each rotor blade assembly of the second series comprising a counter-rotating stage of the multi-stage axial compressor; and
 - an accessory drive connecting the second series of rotor blade assemblies to the driveshaft and causing counter-rotation of the second series of rotor blade assemblies.
17. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 16 further comprising a transmission gear box for rotating the second series of rotor blade assemblies at a different speed with respect to the first series of rotor blade assemblies.
18. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 17 wherein the transmission gear box comprises a gear reducer mechanism.
19. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 16 wherein the static outer casing surrounds and extends along the driveshaft about a central axis of the compressor.
20. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 16 further comprising inlet guide vanes and outlet guide vanes fixedly mounted to the static outer casing.
21. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 20 wherein the static outer casing includes fore and aft flanges mounted or formed with the static outer casing.
22. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 21 wherein the fore and aft flanges secure the inlet and outlet guide vanes at the inlet and outlet ends of the compressor.
23. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 16 wherein the accessory drive comprises an input section and an output section.
24. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 16 wherein the accessory drive is mounted external to the compressor housing and comprises a first accessory shaft and a second accessory shaft.
25. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 24 wherein the accessory drive first bevel gear and a second bevel gear, the first bevel gear engaging with the second bevel gear mounted on an opposite side of the first accessory shaft.
26. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 25 further comprising a third bevel gear which engages with a plurality of gears arranged about the second accessory shaft.
27. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim 26 further comprising a spur gear assembly connected to the second accessory shaft for receiving torque transferred from the plurality of gears arranged about the second accessory shaft.

28. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim **27** wherein the spur gear assembly comprises a spur or helical gear that engages a second spur gear through the second accessory shaft.

29. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim **28** wherein the second spur gear is mounted on the inner casing, the spur gear assembly transferring torque to cause the inner casing to rotate counter to a compressor drum and driveshaft.

30. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim **16** further comprising a flange for directly connecting the first series of rotor blade assemblies to the driveshaft.

31. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim **30** wherein the flange connects a plurality of engine components to the compressor.

32. The multi-stage axial compressor of claim **29** further comprising a thrust bearing for transferring a thrust load generated by the compressor drum to an engine frame by an aerodynamic strut.

* * * * *