Disclosed is a multiple output DC-to-DC converter. The DC input power is filtered and passed through a chopper preregulator. The chopper output is then passed through a current source inverter controlled by a squarewave generator. The resultant AC is passed through the primary winding of a transformer, with high voltages induced in a plurality of secondary windings. The high voltage secondary outputs are each solid-state rectified for passage to individual output loads. Multiple feedback loops control the operation of the chopper preregulator, one being responsive to the current through the primary winding and another responsive to the DC voltage level at a selected output.

3 Claims, 2 Drawing Figures
Fig. 1

Fig. 2
MULTIPLE HIGH VOLTAGE OUTPUT DC-TO-DC POWER CONVERTER

The invention described herein was made in the performance of work under a NASA contract and is subject to the provisions of Section 305 of the National Aeronautics and Space Act of 1958, Public Law 85-568 (72 Stat. 435; 42 U.S.C. 2457).

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of Invention

This invention relates to DC-to-DC power supply converters, particularly those used in applications requiring multiple high voltage, low ripple outputs.

2. Description of Prior Art

In essence, a DC-to-DC converter is an apparatus designed to accept DC power at a first voltage and output DC power at a differing voltage. Typically, such devices operate by converting the DC input to AC, transforming the AC to a higher voltage and rectifying the higher level AC to provide the necessary DC output.

The power supply for a traveling wave tube (TWT) amplifier within an earth satellite presents specific problems. Such a power supply must accept DC from a relatively low voltage power source (typically a solar array) and provide well-regulated, relatively ripple free high voltage power, in a simultaneous manner to a number of outputs having constantly varying loads.

The typical prior art DC-to-DC power converter for such an application accepts the DC source, chops it with a switching device, such as a transistor, re-integrates the signal with inductive and capacitive devices, converts the integrated DC signal to AC with a transistor inverter, transforms the AC to high voltage, rectifies the resultant to DC voltages and configures them to supply a number of outputs.

In such devices, the integration capacitance is physically located "downstream" from the chopper, between the copper inductor and the inverter. In the absence of such capacitance, the desired integration would be lacking, but the input means to the inverter would, because of the presence of the inductor, constitute a current source. The latter configuration would, therefore, limit the current drawn through the chopper and inverter transistors, even during non-steady-state conditions.

With the integration capacitance located as it is in the prior apparatus, the input means becomes a voltage source, because of the electrical energy stored in the intervening capacitor.

Accordingly, during start-up of such a converter, a large current is drawn through the chopper power switch and the inverter transistors, which can easily cause one or more to fail, unless they are highly over rated. Arcing, which can occur in TWT amplifiers, despite emphatic statements to the contrary by their manufacturers, can likewise cause current surges through all the power supply switching chopper and inverter. Finally, because of unpredictable load variations in the TWT depressed collectors, and other factors, such conventional power supplies cannot satisfy the stringent ripple requirements imposed on TWT amplifiers in certain satellite communication system applications.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide a DC-to-DC power supply for high voltage multiple output applications which can meet stringent ripple requirements, even under conditions of constantly varying output loads, with increased reliability of its power switches under start-up and other conditions of dynamic change in current drawn.

Briefly, the power supply of the present invention includes means to cause integration of its inverter input (for example, from a chopper preregulator) to be provided exclusively by an inductance-capacitance combination wherein substantially all of the capacitance is provided by means connected across the high-voltage DC outputs of the inverter. The inverter accepts the integrated DC input and converts it to AC for passage through the primary winding of a transformer. Secondary voltages are induced in each of a plurality of secondary windings, each of which is followed by rectifying means and the capacitive integrating means. The preregulator (which may consist of a transistor chopper), if included, may be governed by one or more feedback loops, which may, for example, employ means to sense peak current through the primary winding and means to sense the DC level at a selected output point.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of an apparatus according to the preferred embodiment of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a schematic representation of a traveling wave tube (TWT) amplifier.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Referring now to FIG. 2, in a TWT amplifier, a cathode 140 is heated by a cathode heater 150, which is energized by a cathode heater supply 160. The heated cathode generates an electron "cloud" which is formed into a beam by an anode 170, energized by an anode supply 180. The beam passes through a primary coil 183 through which an input signal is passed. The input signal modulates the electron beam, which is subsequently passed through a secondary coil 185, causing current with a waveform equivalent to the modulated beam to be induced in the secondary coil. The output from the secondary coil is, in effect, an amplification of the input to the primary coil.

The beam is "collected" by a series of depressed collectors 190a-j. The successive collectors are maintained at a successively lower (i.e., more negative) potential, the final collector 190/ being at the same potential as the cathode 140.

Because of electron beam fluctuation, the impedance represented by the various collectors constantly varies, hopefully within prescribed limits. Arcing can, however, occur. Accordingly, the current drawn by the various stages of the input 200 to the collectors can vary widely. It is necessary, therefore, to provide a power supply which can maintain low ripple and withstand such surges without failure of its switching components.

FIG. 1 shows the preferred embodiment of the present invention, which comprises a power supply satisfying these requirements. It will be noted that FIG. 1 shows only a three-stage high voltage output. It will be
understood, however, than any number of stages can be provided by simply duplicating the components in any one of the stages shown.

The DC input is first low-pass filtered by means of a passive filter $5$, comprising an inductor $L_1$ and capacitor $C_1$. The filtered input is prereregulated by being chopped by means of a switching transistor $Q_1$, whose operation is governed by a digital control signal processor (DCSP) $30$. In alternative embodiments of the present invention, a plurality of switches may be employed to provide whatever prereregulation waveform is needed. In particular, a series pair of switches can be alternately activated to provide an essentially 100% duty cycle.

A series inductor $L_2$ and flyback diode $D_1$ cause the chopper output to be directed unidirectionally to the primary winding $L_3$ of a transformer $T$. This inductor also acts as a choke to limit the current passed through it — i.e., it causes the input and prereregulation means to act together as a current source.

A series inverter consisting of a push-pull pair of transistors $Q_2, Q_3$, operated by a squarewave generator $16$, causes the current in the primary winding $L_3$ of the transformer $T$ to alternate. This, in turn, causes AC voltages to be induced in the secondary windings $L_4, L_5, L_6$ of the transformer.

The AC voltage within secondary winding $L_4$ is rectified by a solid state rectifier $20$ and passed through the integrating capacitor $C_2$ to generate an output DC voltage whose value depends, in a conventional manner, on the input DC voltage and the ratio of windings $30$ between the secondary winding $L_4$ and the primary winding $L_3$ of the transformer $T$.

Likewise, the AC voltages induced in the other secondary windings $L_5$ and $L_6$ are rectified by solid state rectifiers $30$ and $40$, respectively, and passed through integrating capacitors $C_3$ and $C_4$, respectively. Each of the output stages (secondary winding, rectifier and integrator) is interconnected with its neighbor through a current limiting resistor $R_1, R_2$, respectively, which limits integrator capacitor stresses during discontinuities in output loads as well as controlling maximum energy discharged into individual outputs. In addition, the current limiting resistors prevent excessive voltage buildup in the output power return line during impedance discontinuities.

The operation of the switching transistor $Q_1$ may be controlled by various feedback loops. In the preferred embodiment, two of these are utilized.

The first monitors the current through the primary winding $L_3$ of the transformer $T$ by means of a peak current detector $50$, which can simply comprise a series transformer/rectifier. The DC output of the peak current detector is compared with a reference (e.g., from a zener diode) by means of a comparator $80$, the output of which is passed through an operational amplifier $100$.

In the second loop, the output DC level is monitored at some convenient point and compared with a reference (e.g., from a zener diode) by means of a second comparator $60$, the output of which is passed through a second operational amplifier $110$.

The outputs from the first operational amplifier $100$ and the second operational amplifier $110$ are fed to an OR-gate $120$, the output of which constitutes an input to the DCSP $30$ which governs the operation of the switching transistor $Q_1$. The DCSP is conventional, and may comprise an ordinary analog-to-digital converter.

The operation of the DCSP is synchronized by the squarewave generator $10$.

In an alternative embodiment, the power switch $Q_1$, and flyback diode $D_1$ are eliminated, the inverter $Q_2, Q_3$ being utilized as the switching means. In such an embodiment, the DCSP directly operates the inverter.

Regardless of the particular embodiment, however, the position of the integration capacitance on the secondary winding (i.e., high voltage) side of the transformer $T$ is an essential element of the present invention.

Since the capacitance means is physically absent from the inverter input means, the latter means can act as a current source. Thus, under conditions wherein the current drawn would otherwise increase dynamically, the inductor $L_2$ in conjunction with the peak current detector loop, will serve to limit current buildup in the chopper and inverter power transistor and, therefore, prevent damage to the switching transistors.

However, even though the integration capacitance means is not physically located on the low voltage side of the transformer, and can not, therefore, cause the inverter input means to act as a voltage source (as in the prior art apparatus), its electrical effect will "reflect across" the transformer to provide a desired integration in conjunction with the inductor $L_2$. In addition, physical placement of the integration capacitance means at the high voltage output will serve to reduce output ripple, which is a critical factor in TWT applications.

We claim:

1. A DC to DC power converter comprising:
   a. a transformer having a primary winding and a plurality of secondary windings;
   b. input circuit means coupled to said primary winding to cause an AC power to flow therethrough;
   c. said input circuit means including means to accept DC power at a first voltage and transistor means to convert said DC power to AC power at a first relatively low voltage for transmission through said primary winding, said transformer being such that the alternating voltage on each of said secondary windings is higher than that at said primary winding;
   d. output circuit means associated with each of said secondary windings to reconnect AC power induced in the associated secondary winding to DC power at a higher voltage;
   e. a capacitor effectively directly connected across each of said secondary windings, the capacitance of each of said capacitors being reflected across said primary winding to provide an input current source; and
   f. a peak current detector having an input coupled across said primary winding and having an output coupled across said input circuit means, thereby to protect said transistor means against over voltage due to a short in any one of said output circuits.

2. A converter as defined in claim 1 wherein said transistor means includes a transistor operated as a chopper.

3. A converter as defined in claim 2 wherein said transistor means is controlled through a feedback circuit connected between said output circuits and said transistor means.

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