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(72) Inventeurs/Inventors:
Mundt, Rolf-Hans, DE;
Kölzer, Peter, DE

(73) Propriétaire/Owner:
ALCATEL SEL AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT, DE

(74) Agent: ROBIC

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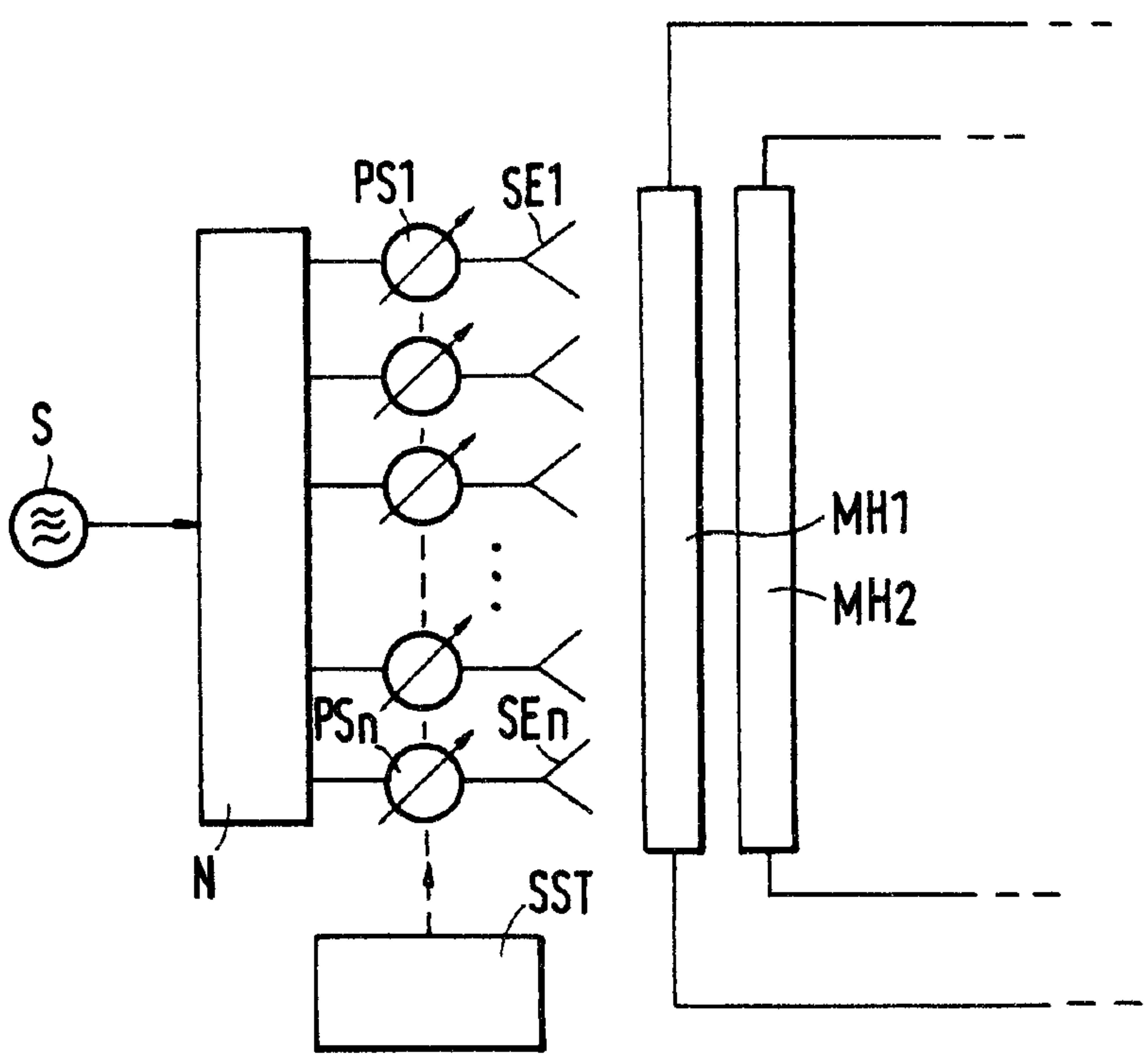
(54) Title: APPARATUS FOR DETERMINING THE APERTURE ILLUMINATION OF A PHASED-ARRAY ANTENNA



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:
An apparatus for determining the aperture illumination of a phased-array antenna is disclosed which evaluates a monitor signal obtained from a first output (A1) of a monitor waveguide (MH) and is also suited for antennas having a greatly restricted scan angle coverage, such as elevation antennas in MLS systems. To obtain information from a portion of the monitor signal corresponding to at least one cycle of the antenna's far-field pattern, portions of the monitor signal which are visible at different monitor angles are joined together for evaluation. This is accomplished by also evaluating signals obtained from a second output of the monitor waveguide which is spatially separated from the first output, or from outputs of additional monitor waveguides, at different monitor angles.

Abstract

An apparatus for determining the aperture illumination of a phased-array antenna is disclosed which evaluates a monitor signal obtained from a first output (A1) of a monitor waveguide (MH) and is also suited for antennas having a greatly restricted scan angle coverage, such as elevation antennas in MLS systems. To obtain information from a portion of the monitor signal corresponding to at least one cycle of the antenna's far-field pattern, portions of the monitor signal which are visible at different monitor angles are joined together for evaluation. This is accomplished by also evaluating signals obtained from a second output of the monitor waveguide which is spatially separated from the first output, or from outputs of additional monitor waveguides, at different monitor angles.

P 42 27 857.0

Apparatus for Determining the Aperture Illumination of a Phased-Array Antenna

The present invention relates to an apparatus as set forth in the preamble of claim 1.

Such apparatus is known from both DE-OS 40 12 101 A1 and U.S. Patent 4,926,186. It is used, for example, to monitor phased-array antennas in microwave landing systems (MLS systems).

In MLS systems it is important for safety reasons to constantly monitor the correct operation of the transmitting devices, particularly the functioning of the indivdual radiating elements of the array antennas. In older MLS systems, this is done, for example, by monitoring currents which flow through PIN diodes connected as phase shifters ahead of the individual radiating elements.

In the apparatus described in the above printed publications, the distribution of the antenna's far field is monitored in addition to the diode current. Since the far field is linked with the aperture illumination of the antenna via a Fourier transform, far-field monitoring makes it possible to detect deviations in both the aperture phase illumination and the aperture amplitude illumination of the individual radiating elements.

Besides by direct field measurements, the distribution of the far field of a phased-array antenna can be determined by means of a so-called integral monitor waveguide, a waveguide component which is arranged parallel to the array axis in the vicinity of the radiating elements and is coupled with the radiation fields of the individual radiating elements via coupling apertures. In such an integral monitor waveguide, the field components from the individual radiating elements combine to form a monitor signal which can be obtained from an output of the integral monitor waveguide and whose waveform, if the scan angle of the antenna beam is sufficiently large, corresponds, to a good approximation, to the far-field pattern except for an angular displacement with respect to the normal to the array axis, the so-called monitor angle.

The monitor angle, by which the monitor signal is shifted with respect to the normal to the array axis, can be influenced within certain limits by the dimensions of the integral monitor waveguide and by the shape of the coupling apertures. It can be taken into account in calculating the aperture illumination of the antenna, so that this calculation, despite the displacement of the monitor signal by the monitor angle, can be made from this monitor signal by way of a Fourier transform.

A prerequisite for a good match between the monitor signal derived from the integral monitor waveguide and the far-field pattern of the antenna, and thus for a correct calculation of the aperture illumination of the antenna, is that the antenna is scanned through a sufficiently large angular range. This angular range should cover at least one full cycle of the far-field pattern, so that field information of one complete cycle of the far-field pattern is available for performing the Fourier transform.

In most cases, however, MLS antennas have a restricted scan angle which frequently covers only a fraction of one cycle of the far-field pattern. In such cases, the Fourier transformation of the monitor signal becomes erroneous and, thus, unsuitable. Correction of errors due to too small a scan angle by performing a window function as proposed in the above-mentioned U.S. patent in column 9, lines 34-42, provides no fundamental remedy and may possibly be useful if the scan angle is only very much less than one cycle of the far-field pattern.

It is, therefore, the object of the invention to improve an apparatus for determining an aperture illumination of a phased-array antenna in such a way that a sufficiently accurate calculation of the aperture illumination of a phased-array antenna using an integral monitor waveguide is possible even for antennas with a greatly restricted scan angle coverage.

This object is attained by an apparatus for determining an aperture illumination of a phased-array antenna, comprising:

- a plurality of radiating elements (SE1...SEn) respectively coupled via coupling apertures to at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH);
- a first signal-conditioning circuit (SAB1) connected to a first output (A1) of said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH), for determining at least one real part and any existing imaginary parts of a time-dependent complex monitor signal provided by said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH);
- said signal-conditioning circuit (SAB1) feeding said at least one real part and said any existing imaginary parts of said complex monitor signal to a signal processing circuit (SV) having a signal processor (SP) therein, for continuously calculating the aperture illumination of the phased-array antenna from said at least one real part and said any existing imaginary parts of said complex monitor signal determined by said first signal-conditioning circuit (SAB1);
- said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH of FIG. 3 or MH1, MH2 of FIG. 5) having a second output (A2) which is spatially separated from said first output (A1 of FIG. 3), said second output (A2) being connected to a second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2 of FIG. 3) which determines said at least one real part and said any existing imaginary parts of said complex monitor signal that are provided at said second output (A2) of said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH);
- said first signal-conditioning circuit (SAB1) and said second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2) respectively feeding at least said at least one real part of said

complex monitor signal to said signal processing circuit (SV); and wherein:

- said signal processing circuit (SV) further calculates from said at least one real part and said any existing imaginary parts of said complex monitor signal determined by said second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2), the aperture illumination of the phased-array antenna.

Through the second output of the integral monitor wave-guide, which is spatially separated from the first output, and the additional evaluation of the monitor signal provided there, the scan angle coverage needed to calculate the aperture illumination is, in the best case, doubled. If the two outputs are provided at both ends of the integral monitor waveguide as claimed in claim 2, the first output will provide a monitor signal which only contains information from a region of the far-field pattern corresponding to the width of the scan angle. The position of this information-providing, i.e., "visible" region within the far-field pattern is determined by the monitor angle Θ. The second output at the other end of the integral monitor waveguide will provide a monitor signal which also contains only information from a region of the far-field pattern corresponding to the width of the scan angle. However, this region is visible at a different monitor angle, namely the angle $-\Theta$, located symmetrically with respect to 0°, the perpendicular bisector on the array axis. If the scan angle is not too small, it is now possible to utilize the monitor signals obtained from the two outputs, or conditioned parts thereof, in a mutually complementary manner. If the visible regions can be so adjusted in position and width as to cover together one cycle of the far-field pattern, an accurate calculation of the aperture illumination of the antenna can be performed. In extreme cases, e.g., in the case of MLS elevation antennas, the scan angle is so small (e.g., only 15°) that even if the monitor signal obtained from a second output of the integral monitor waveguide is additionally evaluated, no visible region corresponding to a full cycle of the far-field pattern can be composed.

In this case, according to a further advantageous aspect of the invention described in claim 3, use can be made of one or more additional integral monitor waveguides whose monitor angles are adjusted so that the associated visible regions of the far-field pattern as a whole cover those angular ranges of a cycle which are not covered by the visible regions of the first integral monitor waveguide.

Embodiments of the apparatus according to the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 shows schematically a prior art apparatus for determining the aperture illumination;

Fig. 2 shows a monitor signal derived with the apparatus of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 shows schematically an apparatus for determining the aperture illumination in accordance with the invention;

Fig. 4 shows the monitor signals derived with the apparatus of Fig. 3;

Fig. 5 shows schematically a further apparatus in accordance with the invention, and

Fig. 6 shows a composite monitor signal composed of four monitor signals.

Fig. 1 shows schematically a prior art apparatus for determining the aperture illumination of an MLS array

antenna. A transmitter S feeds a number of radiating elements SE1...SEn via a network N. The radio-frequency energy is supplied to the radiating elements through phase shifters PS1...PSn, generally PIN diodes, which precede the individual radiating elements, are activated at predetermined times by a beam-steering unit SST, and each set a predetermined phase shift.
Disposed in the vicinity of the radiating elements, parallel to the array axis, is an integral monitor waveguide MH having coupling apertures (not shown) each of which is on a level with one of the radiating elements. Its output A is connected via a signal-conditioning circuit SAB and a subsequent analog-to-digital converter AD to a signal-processing circuit SV. The signal-processing circuit contains a high-speed signal processor which is capable of performing mathematical operations, such as fast Fourier transforms, in real time.

The prior art apparatus illustrated in Fig. 1 evaluates a monitor signal which is shown in Fig. 2. This signal is formed in the integral monitor waveguide MH by superposition of the components of the transmitted MLS signal which originate from the individual radiating elements, are coupled through the coupling apertures into the waveguide, and have different phase shifts. The monitor signal obtained from the output A corresponds to the far-field pattern of the MLS antenna except for an angular displacement with respect to the normal to the array axis, the monitor angle Θ_M. Like from the far-field pattern, the aperture illumination of the antenna can thus also be calculated from this monitor signal via a Fourier transform, and predetermined test values can be compared with stored desired values to monitor the correct functioning of the transmitting device. Various methods for signal conditioning and calculating the aperture illumination are described in the above-mentioned DE-OS 40 12 101.

To calculate the aperture illumination from the far-field pattern, or from the monitor signal derived by means of the integral monitor waveguide, via a Fourier transform, measured or sample values from at least one whole cycle of the far field or of a monitor signal corresponding to this far field must be available. This will not be the case if the scan angle of the antenna is less than the angular range covered by one cycle of the far-field pattern. Then the aperture illumination calculated via a Fourier transform will not correspond to the actual illumination and will thus be unsuitable.

In Fig. 3, unlike in the arrangement shown in Fig. 1, the integral monitor waveguide MH has two opposite outputs A1 and A2. Each of the outputs is followed by a signal-conditioning circuit SAB1, SAB2 which applies a conditioned monitor signal through an analog-to-digital converter AD1, AD2 to a signal-processing circuit SV. The monitor signals MS1, MS2 provided at the outputs A1 and A2 differ in their monitor angle Θ_M. At the different monitor angles, different portions MS1, MS2 of the composite monitor signal corresponding to the far-field pattern are visible if the scan angle coverage is restricted. The width of the respective visible portions corresponds to the scan angle coverage of the antenna. Their positions are apparent from Figs. 4a and 4b:

In Fig. 4a, the monitor signal MS1 from the output A1 appears at a monitor angle Θ_{M1} from the center of the antenna (perpendicular bisector on the array axis), i.e., displaced to the right. Thus, portions of the one-cycle-wide composite monitor signal required to calculate the aperture illumination which are located on the right-hand side remain invisible. By contrast, the left-hand signal side is visible up to the beginning of the cycle. In the case of the monitor signal MS2 from the output A2, which is shown in Fig. 4b, the monitor angle Θ_{M2} is located symmetrically with respect to that of the monitor signal MS1, i.e., displaced to the left of the antenna center. The visible portion covered by the monitor signal thus covers components of the total monitor signal which extend to the right-hand border of the signal cycle, while at the left-hand edge of the signal cycle, signal components remain invisible. From Figs. 4a and 4b it can be seen that the monitor signals MS1 and MS2 together contain the whole information of one cycle of the monitor signal. The sample values required to calculate the aperture illumination can thus be derived from the two monitor signals if the different monitor angles are taken into account as numerical values.

In special cases, e.g., in the case of elevation antennas which scan through an angle of only 15^{o}, doubling the visible portion of the composite monitor signal by deriving an additional monitor signal at a mirrored monitor angle will not be sufficient to make the composite monitor signal corresponding to a whole cycle of the antenna's far field visible. To obtain information for a whole cycle of the monitor signal in this case, too, the embodiment illustrated in Fig. 5 includes a second integral monitor waveguide MH2 which also provides monitor signals at two outputs located at opposite ends thereof. Since the monitor angle of an integral monitor waveguide can be influenced and set by the design of the waveguide and by the position and shape of the coupling apertures, such a setting permits portions of a one-cycle-wide monitor signal which are not yet made visible by evaluatable monitor signals to be made visible by monitor signals of an additional integral monitor waveguide.

Fig. 6 shows how in the case of an antenna with a greatly restricted scan range coverage, a whole cycle of a composite monitor signal can be formed from four monitor signals MSI...MSIV of limited width with the monitor angles θ_A, $-\theta_A$, θ_B, $-\theta_B$.

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. Apparatus for determining an aperture illumination of a phased-array antenna, comprising:

- a plurality of radiating elements (SE1...SEn) respectively coupled via coupling apertures to at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH);
- a first signal-conditioning circuit (SAB1) connected to a first output (A1) of said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH), for determining at least one real part and any existing imaginary parts of a time-dependent complex monitor signal provided by said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH);
- said signal-conditioning circuit (SAB1) feeding said at least one real part and said any existing imaginary parts of said complex monitor signal to a signal processing circuit (SV) having a signal processor (SP) therein, for continuously calculating the aperture illumination of the phased-array antenna from said at least one real part and said any existing imaginary parts of said complex monitor signal determined by said first signal-conditioning circuit (SAB1);
- said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH of FIG. 3 or MH1, MH2 of FIG. 5) having a second output (A2) which is spatially separated from said first output (A1 of FIG. 3), said second output (A2) being connected to a second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2 of FIG. 3) which determines said at least one real part and said any existing imaginary parts of said complex monitor signal that are provided at said second output (A2) of said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH);

- said first signal-conditioning circuit (SAB1) and said second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2) respectively feeding at least said at least one real part of said complex monitor signal to said signal processing circuit (SV); and wherein:
- said signal processing circuit (SV) further calculates from said at least one real part and said any existing imaginary parts of said complex monitor signal determined by said second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2), the aperture illumination of the phased-array antenna.

2. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein said first and second outputs (A1, A2) are provided from first and second opposite ends of said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH).

3. The apparatus as claimed in claim 1, wherein:
- said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH) comprises first (MH1) and second (MH2) integral monitor waveguides, which respectively have said first and second outputs (A1, A2);
- said first integral monitor waveguide (MH1) provides a first complex monitor signal at said first and second outputs (A1, A2) thereof that is different from a second complex monitor signal provided at said first and second (A1, A2) outputs of said second integral monitor waveguide (MH2);
- said second complex monitor signal of said second integral monitor waveguide (MH2) is coupled to said second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2) which determines said at least one real part of said second complex monitor signal provided by the second integral monitor waveguide (MH2);

- said second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2) feeding said at least one real part of said second complex monitor signal to said signal processor (SP); and
- said signal processor (SP) calculates from said real and said any existing imaginary parts of said second complex monitor signal determined by said second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2), the aperture illumination of the phased-array antenna.

4. The apparatus as claimed in claim 3, wherein said second complex monitor signal produced by said second (MH2) integral monitor waveguide has a monitor angle that is different from a first monitor angle θ_M of the first complex monitor signal provided by the first (MH1) integral monitor waveguide.

5. The apparatus as claimed in claim 2, wherein:
- said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH) comprises first (MH1) and second (MH2) integral monitor waveguides, which respectively provide said first and second outputs (A1, A2);
- said first integral monitor waveguide (MH1) provides a first complex monitor signal at said first and second outputs (A1, A2) thereof that is different from a second complex monitor signal provided at said first and second (A1, A2) outputs of said second integral monitor waveguide (MH2);
- said second complex monitor signal of said second integral monitor waveguide (MH2) is coupled to said second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2) which determines at least said at least one real part of said second complex

monitor signal provided by the second integral monitor waveguide (MH2);

- said second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2) feeding at least said one real part of said second complex monitor signal to said signal processor (SP); and

- said signal processor (SP) calculates from said real and said any existing imaginary parts of said second complex monitor signal determined by said second signal-conditioning circuit (SAB2), the aperture illumination of the phased-array antenna.

6. The apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein said second complex monitor signal produced by said second (MH2) integral monitor waveguide has a monitor angle that is different from a first monitor angle θ_M of the first complex monitor signal provided by the first (MH1) integral monitor waveguide.

7. In a method for determining an aperture illumination of a phased-array antenna having a plurality of radiating elements (SE1...SEn) coupled via coupling apertures to at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH), the steps comprising:

- providing first and second spatially separated outputs (A1, A2) from said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH);

- respectively connecting first and second signal-conditioning circuits (SAB1, SAB2) to said first and second outputs (A1, A2) of said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH) for respectively determining at least one real part and any existing imaginary parts of a time-dependent complex monitor signal which is provided by said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH) at each of said first and second outputs (A1, A2) thereof;

- said time-dependent complex monitor signal provided at each of said first (A1) and second (A2) outputs being identical to each other except for a sign of a respective monitor angle θ_M thereof; and

- feeding said at least one real part and said any existing imaginary parts of said complex monitor signal determined by said first and second signal-conditioning circuits (SAB1, SAB2) to a signal processing circuit (SV) having a signal processor (SP) therein, for continuously calculating the aperture illumination of said phased-array antenna from said real and said any existing imaginary parts of said complex monitor signal determined by said first and second signal-conditioning circuits (SAB1, SAB2).

8. The method as claimed in claim 7, wherein:

- said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH) comprises first (MH1) and second (MH2) integral monitor waveguides that respectively have said first (A1) and said second (A2) outputs;

- said first complex monitor signal provided at the first and second outputs (A1, A2) of said first (MH1) integral monitor waveguide (MH1) being identical to each other except for a sign of a first respective monitor angle θ_M thereof;

- said second complex monitor output signal provided at the first and second outputs (A1, A2) of said second integral monitor waveguide (MH2) being identical to each other except for a sign of a second respective monitor angle thereof;

- said second complex monitor signal provided by said second (MH2) integral monitor waveguide having said second monitor angle that is different from θ_M of the first complex monitor signal provided by said first (MH1) integral monitor waveguide;

said method further comprising the steps of:

- respectively connecting said first and second (A1, A2) outputs of each of said integral monitor waveguides (MH1, MH2) to a respective one of said first and second (SAB1, SAB2) signal-conditioning circuits for respectively determining said at least one real part and said any existing imaginary parts of said first and second complex monitor signals provided thereto by the respective integral monitor waveguides (MH1, MH2);
- feeding the at least one real part of the first and second complex monitor signals determined by the first and second (SAB1, SAB2) signal-conditioning circuits to the signal processor (SP); and then
- processing the at least one real and said any existing imaginary parts of said first and second complex monitor signals determined by said first and second signal-conditioning circuits (SAB1, SAB2), to calculate the aperture illumination.

9. The method as claimed in claim 7, further comprising:
- positioning the first and second outputs (A1 and A2) of the integral monitor waveguide (MH) at first and second opposite ends of said at least one integral monitor waveguide.

10. The method as claimed in claim 9, wherein:

- said at least one integral monitor waveguide (MH) comprises first (MH1) and second (MH2) integral monitor waveguides that respectively have said first (A1) and said second (A2) outputs;
- said first complex monitor signal provided at the first and second outputs (A1, A2) of said first (MH1) integral monitor waveguide (MH1) being identical to each other except for a sign of a first respective monitor angle θ_M thereof;
- said second complex monitor output signal provided at the first and second outputs (A1, A2) of said second integral monitor waveguide (MH2) being identical to each other except for a sign of a second respective monitor angle thereof;
- said second complex monitor signal provided by said second (MH2) integral monitor waveguide having said second monitor angle that is different from θ_M of the first complex monitor signal provided by said first (MH1) integral monitor waveguide;

said method further comprising the steps of:

- respectively connecting said first and second (A1, A2) outputs of each of said integral monitor waveguide (MH1, MH2) to a respective one of said first and second (SAB1, SAB2) signal-conditioning circuits for respectively determining said at least one real part and said any existing imaginary parts of said first and second complex monitor signals provided thereto by the respective integral monitor waveguides (MH1, MH2);
- feeding the at least one real part of the first and second complex monitor signals determined by the first and

second (SAB1, SAB2) signal-conditioning circuits to the signal processor (SP); and then

- processing the at least one real and said any existing imaginary parts of said first and second complex monitor signals determined by said first and second signal-conditioning circuits (SAB1, SAB2), to calculate the aperture illumination.

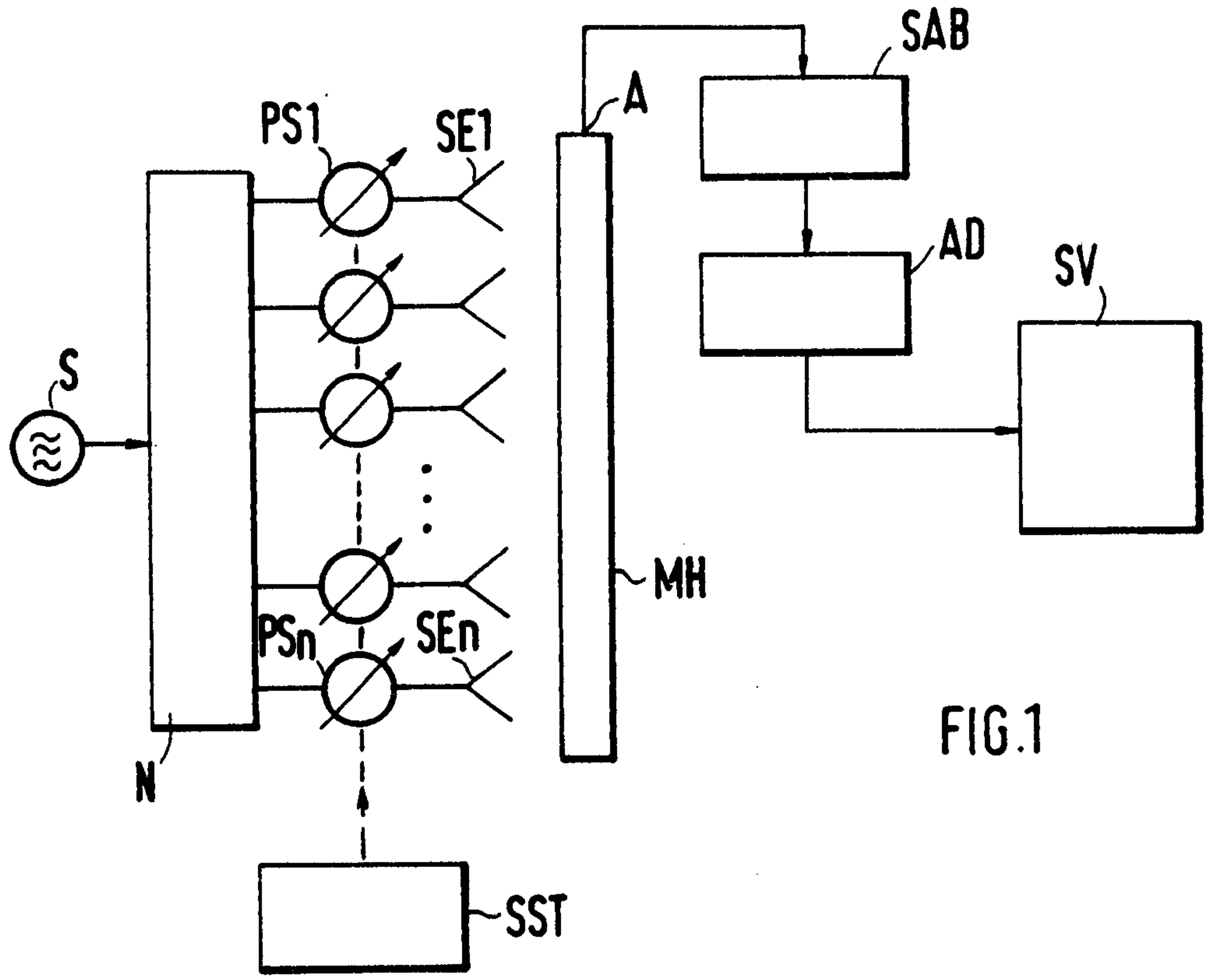

SAB
A
PS1
SE1
AD
SV
S
MH
PSn
SEn
N
SST

FIG.1

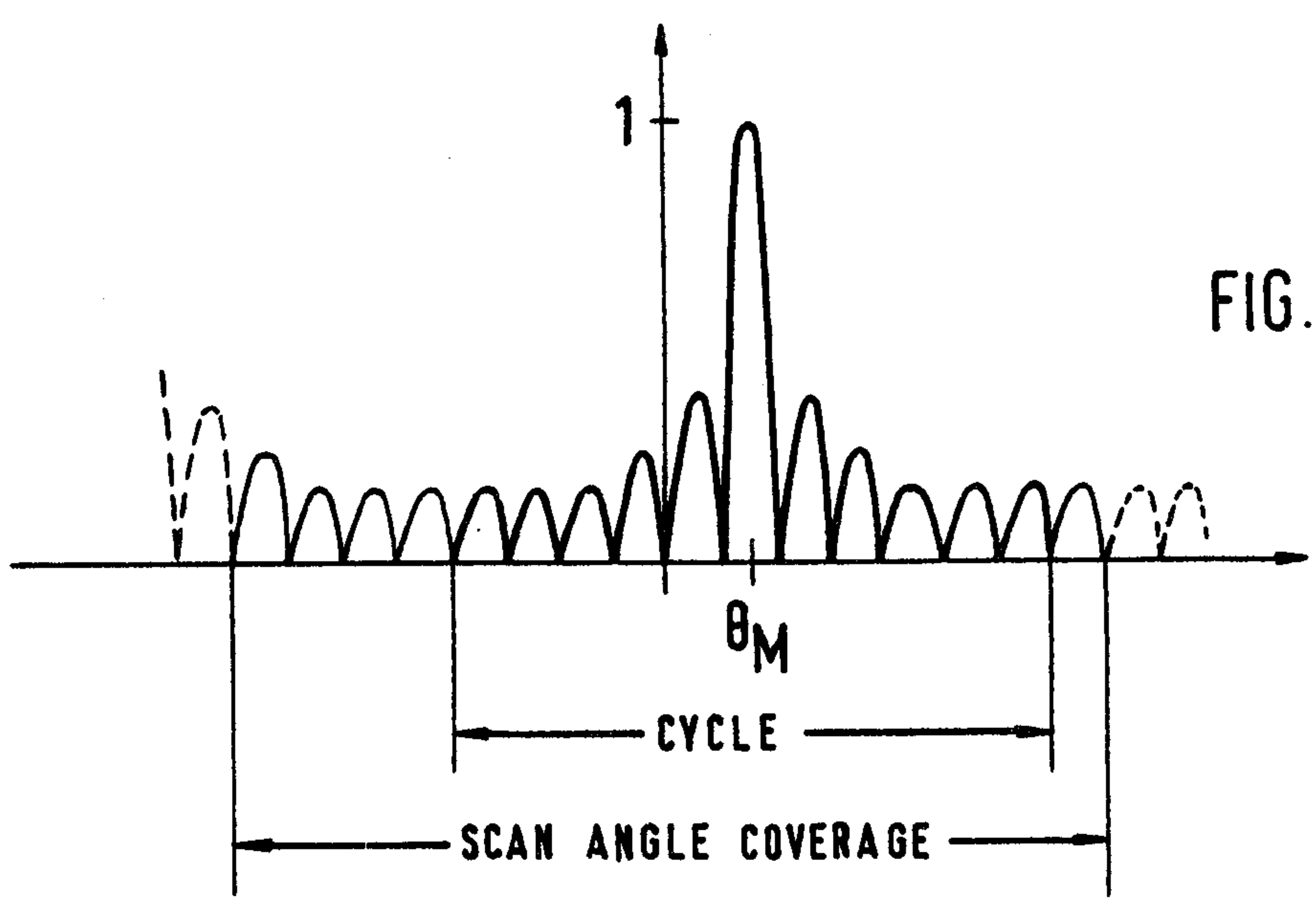

1
θ_M
CYCLE
SCAN ANGLE COVERAGE

FIG.2

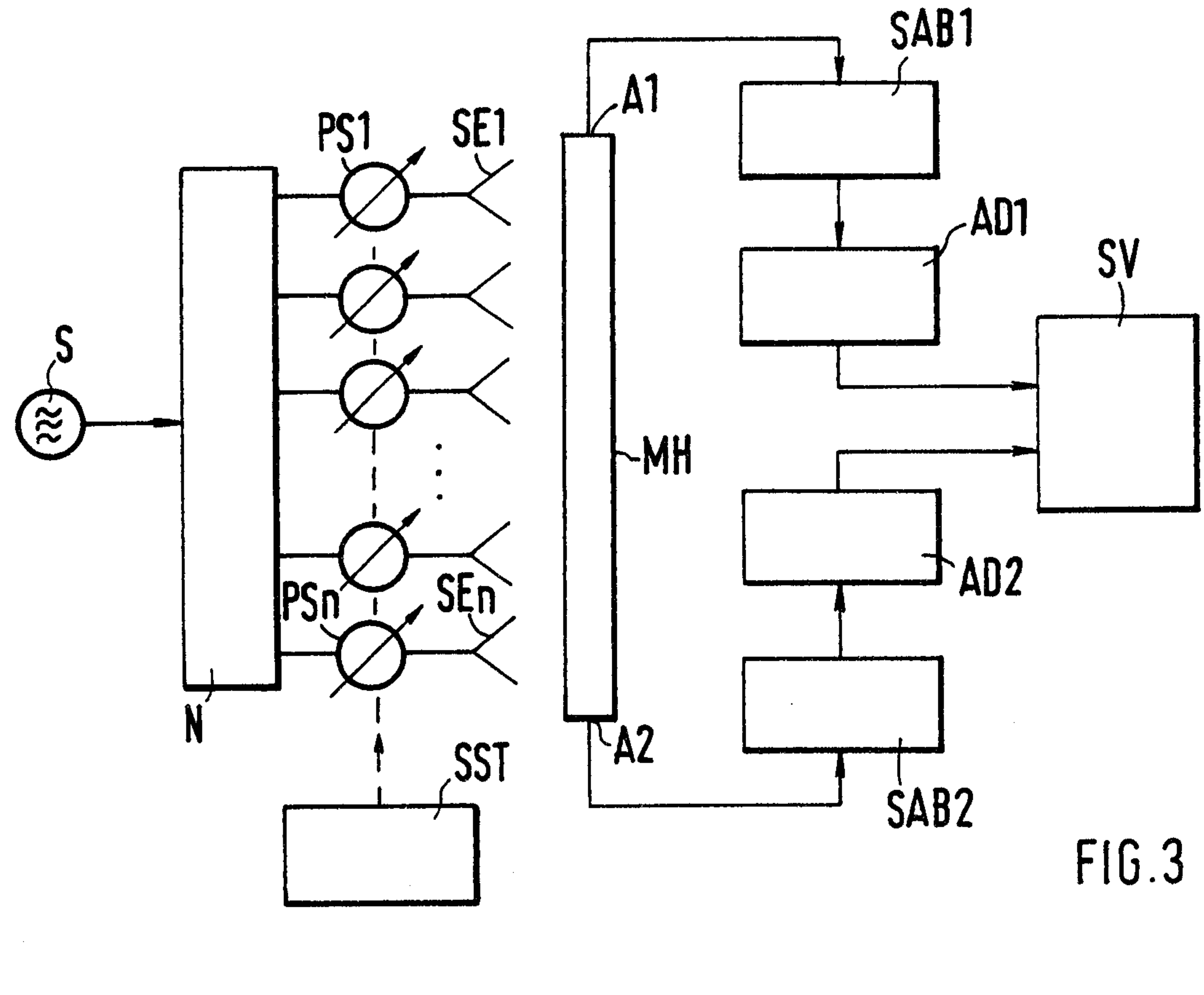


FIG.3

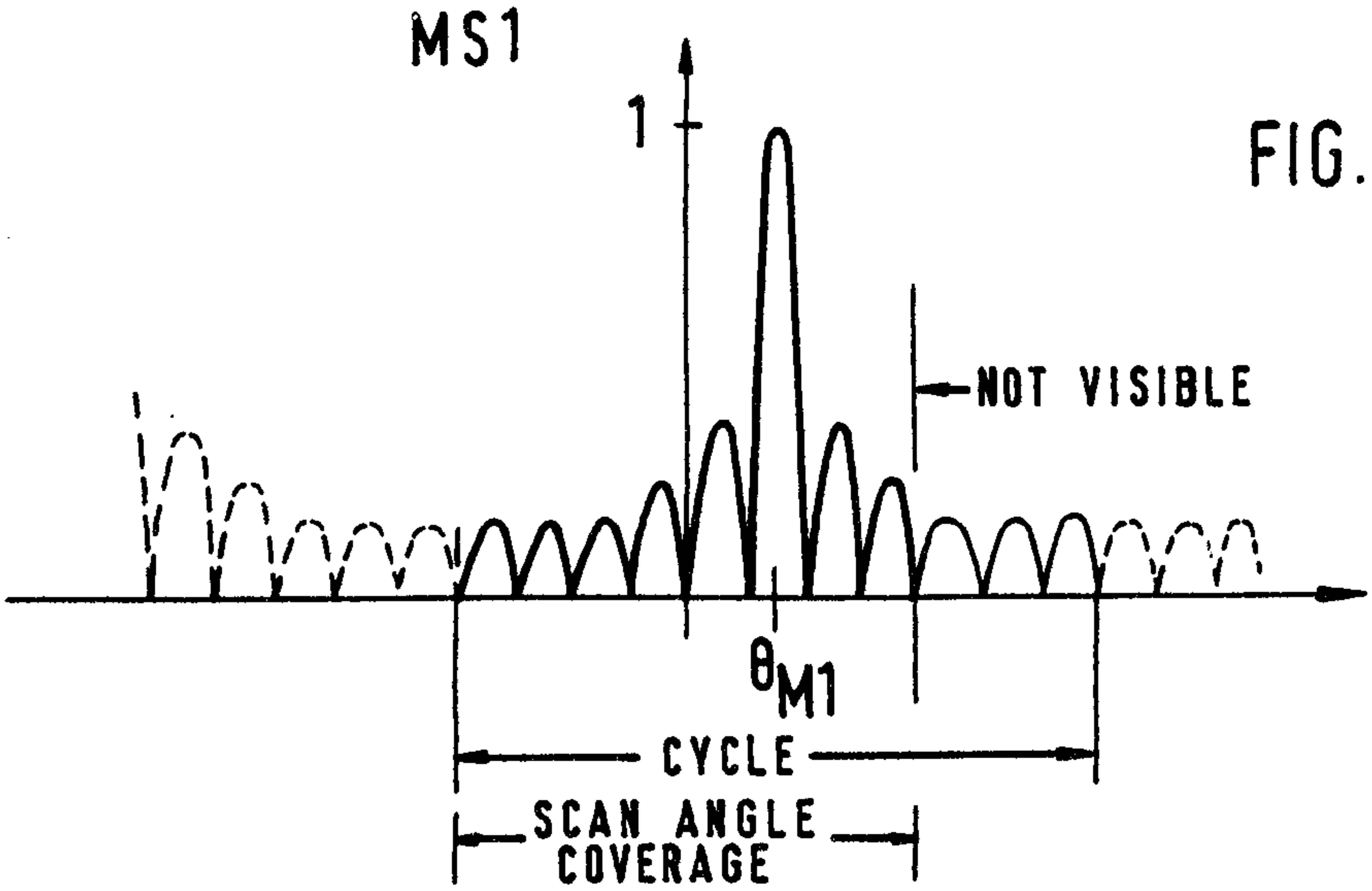

MS1
1
NOT VISIBLE
θM1
CYCLE
SCAN ANGLE
COVERAGE

FIG.4A

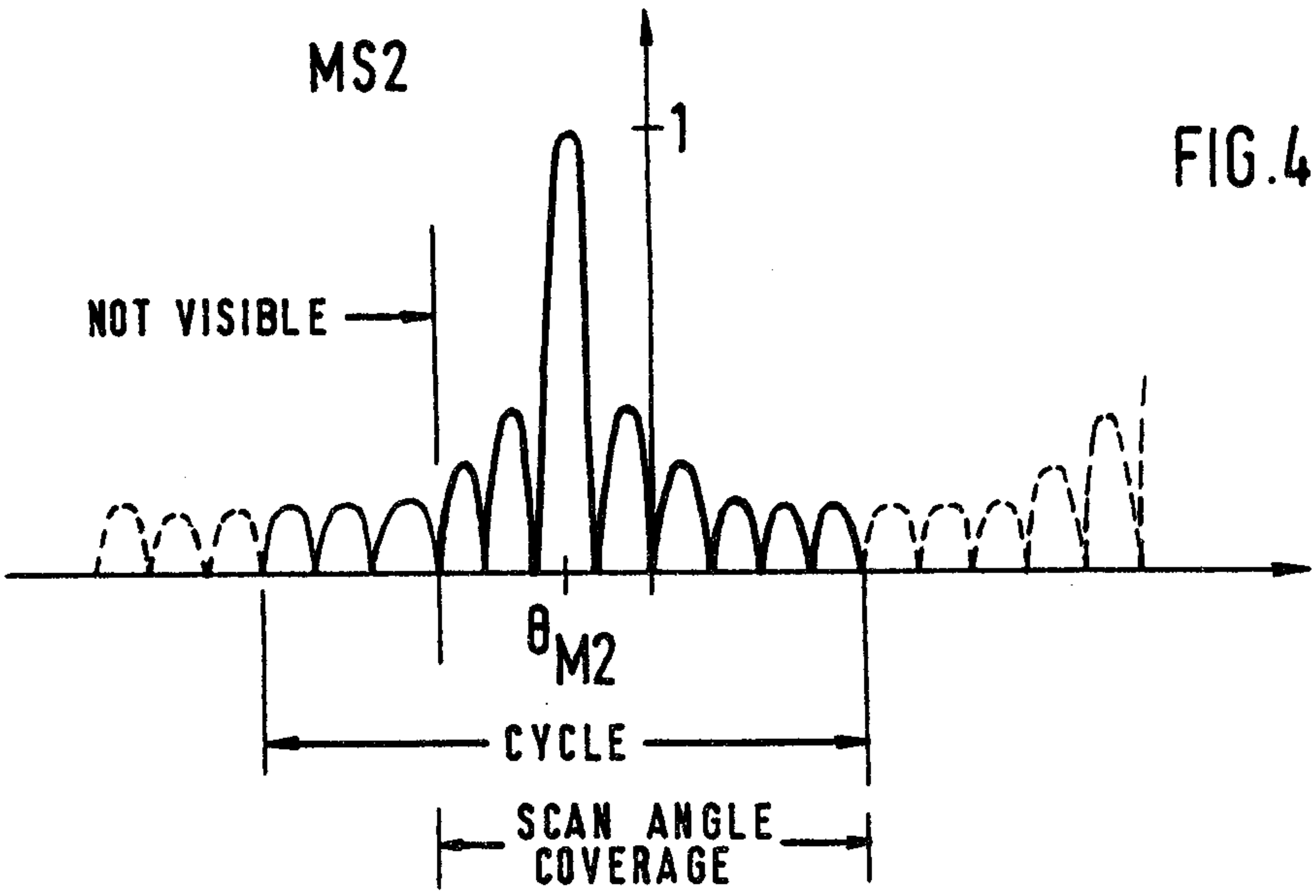

MS2
1
NOT VISIBLE
θM2
CYCLE
SCAN ANGLE
COVERAGE

FIG.4B

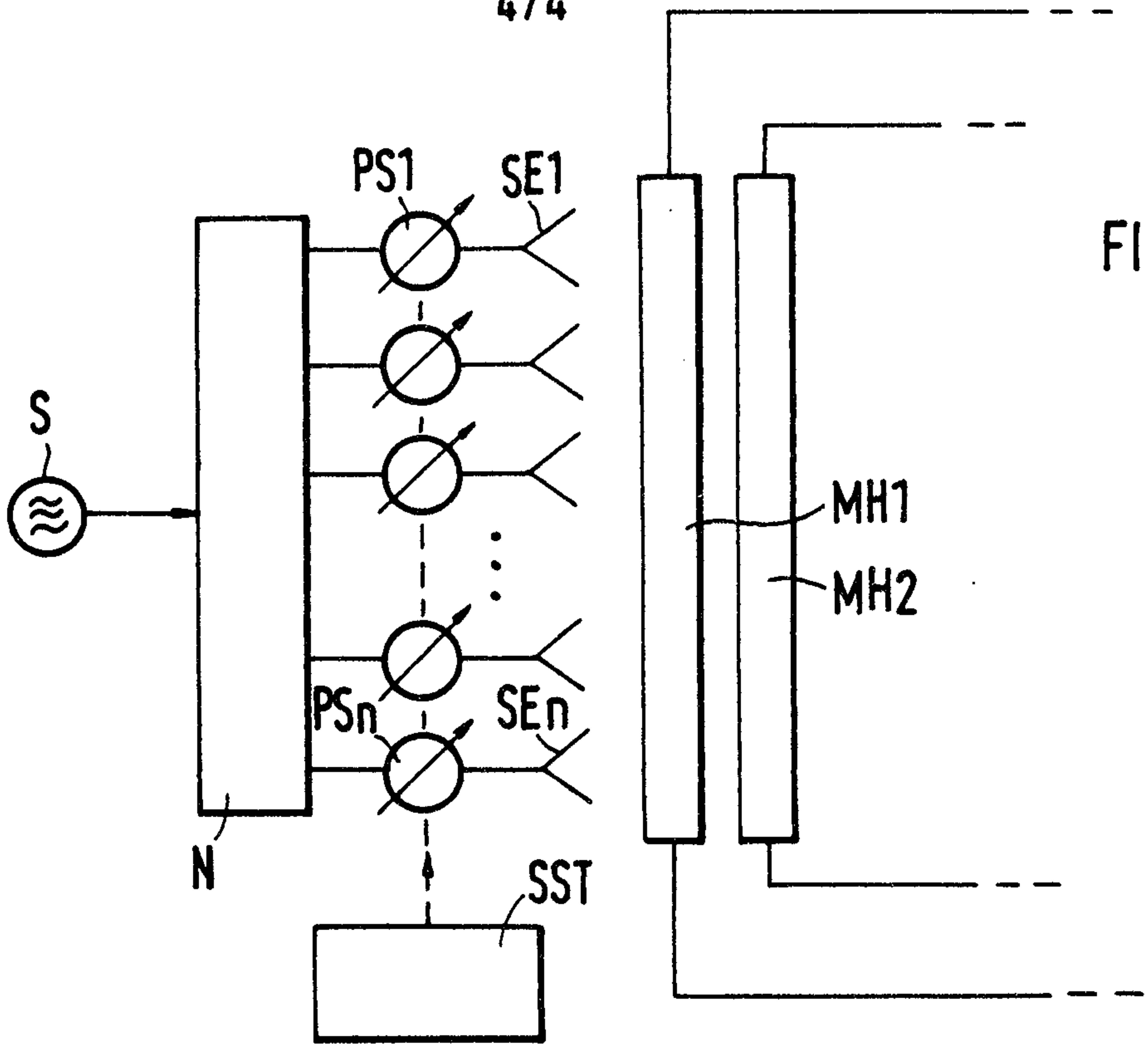

PS1
SE1
S
N
MH1
MH2
PSn
SEn
SST

FIG.5

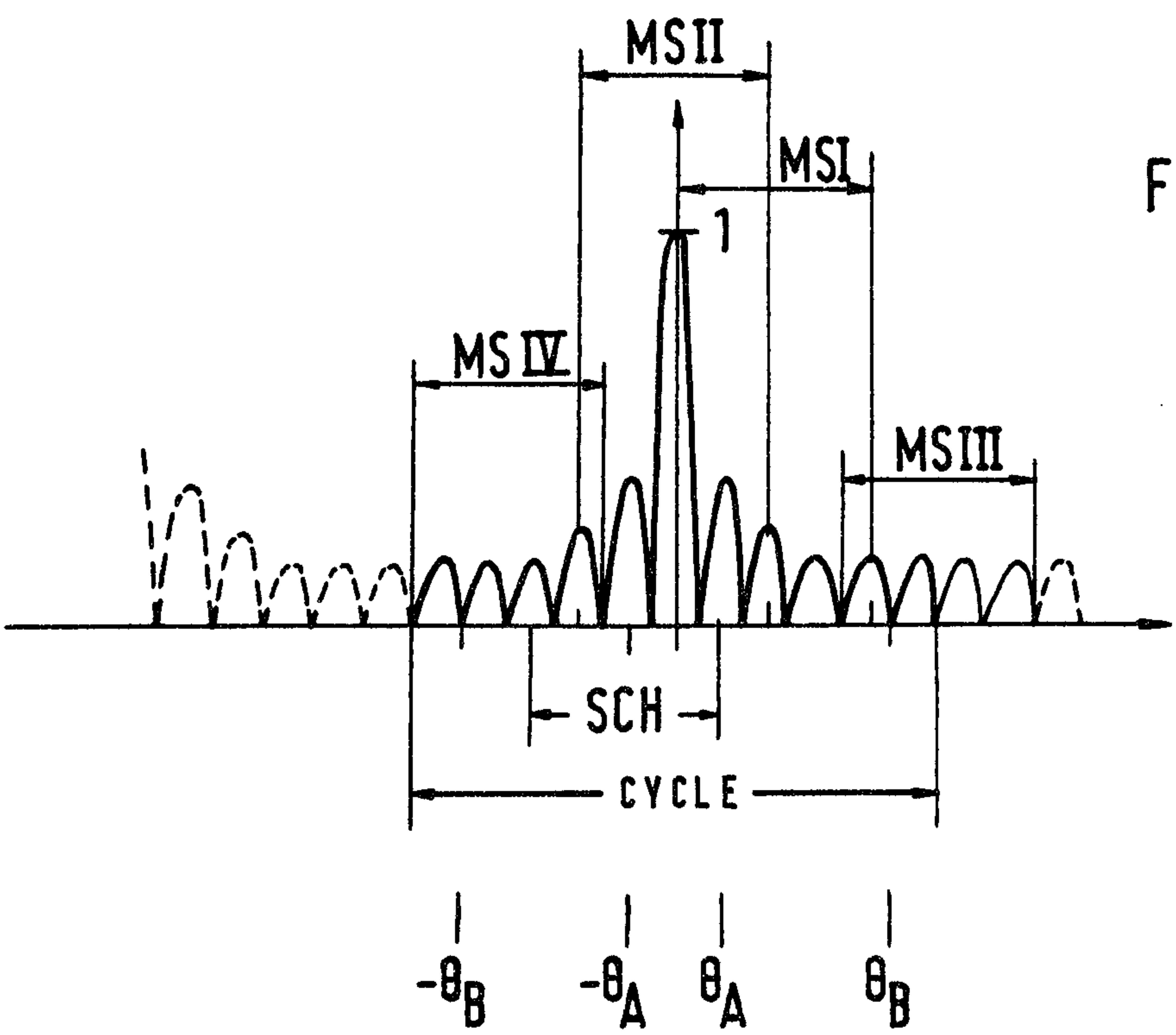
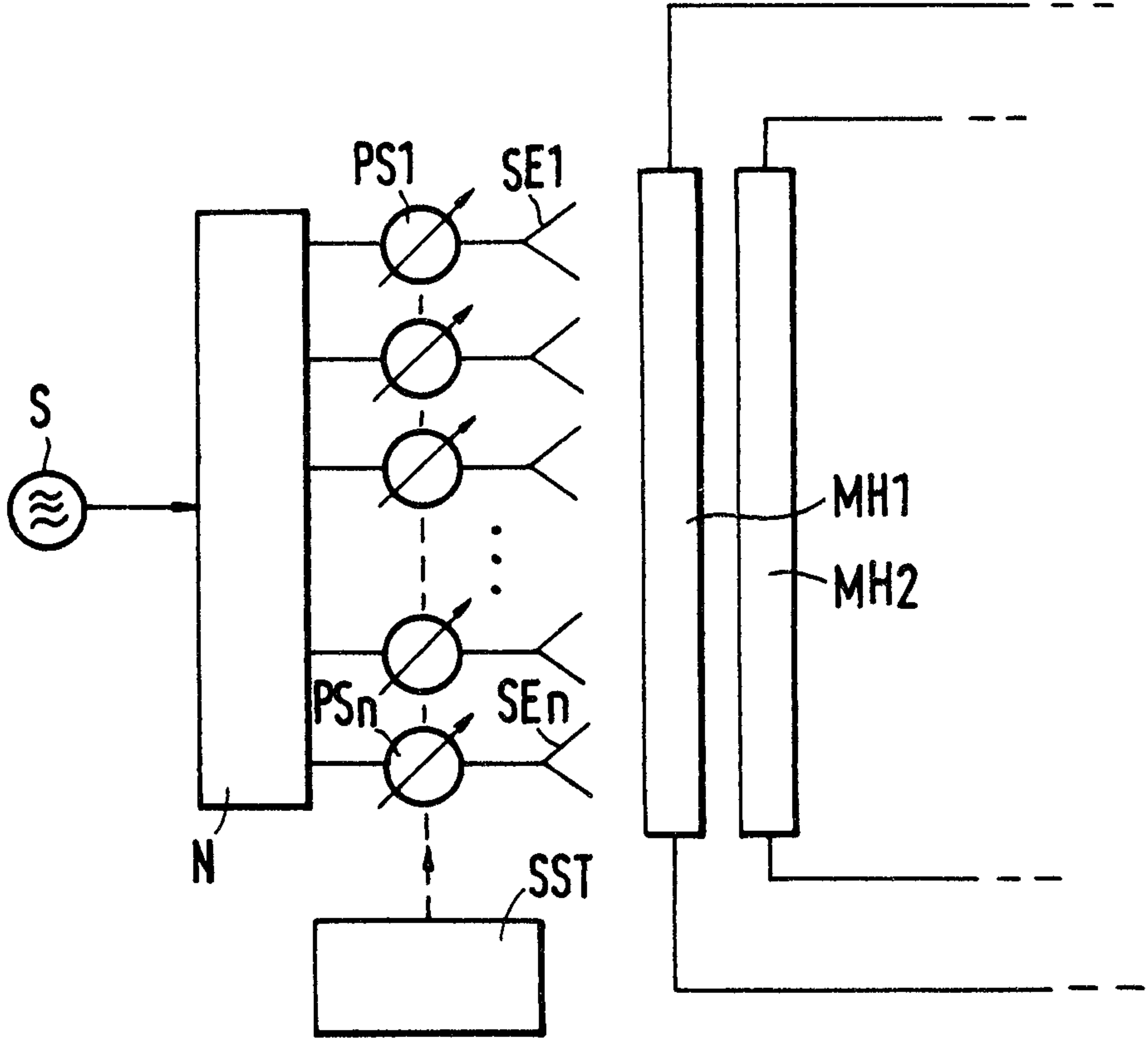

MS II
MS I
1
MS IV
MS III
SCH
CYCLE
$-\theta_B$
$-\theta_A$
θ_A
θ_B

FIG.6



PS1
SE1
S
MH1
MH2
PSn
SEn
N
SST