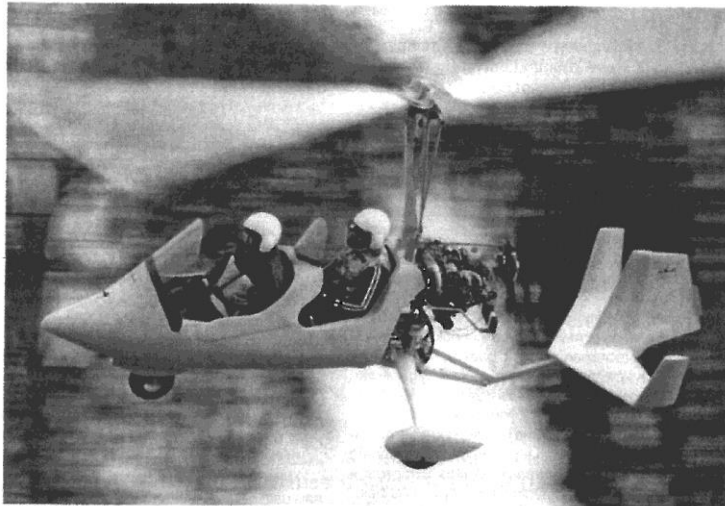


AN INTRODUCTION TO THE AUTOGIRO MELODY

A REPORT FROM SPAIN



ELA07 in flight.



Sigitas Leonavičius, Emilio Lopez Alemany and Vilma Jankienė after the flight.

Every way of flying can be fascinating. The only thing is that one must feel the triumph of the flight. It is symbolic that my first introduction into the autogiros happened in Spain, where more than 80 years ago Juan de la Cierva designed and was building successful autogiros that were flying with the power of a propeller turned by the engine and a rotor turning because of the moving stream of air. One Cierva autogiro C-30P was also used by the Lithuanian aeroclub before the 2nd World War. "ELA Aviacion" is located in a small

town of Fuente Obejuna close to Cordoba. The manager of the factory Emilio Lopez Alemany showed us the production processes and of course we had a chance to fly it. An autogiro ELA07 was being tested and improved for seven years and last year a series production was started. Now 8 aircraft are built monthly and there are orders for October already. About 80% of the autogiros are exported to other countries: France, Belgium, Great Britain, Italy, South Africa, Norway, Iran, Mexico, and Israel. Now there are about 180 ELA autogiros already flying. All parts are built in the factory except the engine: the buyer can

choose between Rotax 912 and Rotax 914 Turbo, and the engine that makes nearly half of the price. The prices start from 36 thousand EUR.

The owner Emilio Lopez Alemany involved whole his family in the business: his wife, two sons Emilio and Daniel and a wife of his senior son. One son is testing aircraft in the air, while the other is generating ideas. 19 people are working in the factory. The autogiro tests are performed once in a month but for the whole day: tests on the ground, engine run test and about 2 hours of flight testing. According to the owners, a fully build autogiro does not provide any problems.

Emilio senior got interested in the autogiros when he saw when his friends were flying a rotorkite towed behind a car. He thought that more could be done. And he learned flying with an autogiro he built himself. Now he has flown more than 1000 hours. There are a lot of ideas of providing various services: sightseeing, crop dusting, observation. He said that there are agreements signed with police of Andalusia for observation flights. The contracts will be signed in Central America for ELA07 with special equipment for spreading chemicals. Autogiros with closed cockpit will be produced starting from the next year: when the pilot is sitting in the open, it might be suitable for the Southern countries, but in Northern Europe the flying

season becomes very short. E.Lopez believes that more options will increase the popularity of the autogiro. It is not difficult to learn to pilot it – it takes about 21 hour. That is the same as in any other ultralight aircraft.

A flight in an ELA07 autogiro was scheduled at noon. The hangar and the small airfield are nearby. After short instructions we are already in the air. Emilio is sitting in front and continues asking if everything was all right. My initial skepticism evaporated as quickly as the morning mist. It was similar as a flight in an open motorized hang glider. The speed was low enough that I had time to take some photographs. Just about 30 meters are needed for landing, which is very soft. The rotors stop to a stand very quickly too.

Observing other flights from the ground I heard a nice whistling sound that I had not heard before. Now I will not mix up this sound with any other. An autogiro is not so noisy and plays a beautiful melody. I realized that it is very easy to let an autogiro into ones heart. Just the capabilities and flight philosophy are to be understood.

When this article was ready for press, Sigitas called and informed us that "Traidenis", a company he is managing, became "ELA Aviacion" representative in the Baltic countries.

VILMA JANKIENĖ [page 4-7]