

QUE PASA? CUBA TRIP DOOMS ADS - Miami Herald, The (FL) - August 14, 1998 - page 1B

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Pan American **Hospital** has canceled a TV advertising campaign featuring a Cuban American actress because the woman plans to perform in Havana.

"The commercials have been canceled," said Roberto Tejedor, the **hospital's** executive vice president, on Thursday. "We are not in accord with her trip to **Cuba**."

The actress, Ana Margarita Martinez Casado, is a member of New York City's renowned Teatro Repertorio Espanol, which will travel to Havana in late September for a two-week engagement.

Martinez could not be reached for comment Thursday. According to Gilberto Zaldivar, the Teatro's director, she was rehearsing at a place without a telephone.

Debate began to swirl in Miami's Cuban community Wednesday, when The Herald reported that the Teatro would stage *Revoltillo* (Scrambled Eggs), a play by Cuban exile Eduardo Machado, at Havana's Hubert de Blanck Hall. The play is directed by Rene Buch, also a Cuban exile, and includes several Cuban Americans in its cast.

The controversy focused on Martinez, best known to American audiences by her role in the TV series *Que Pasa, USA?* Callers to Spanish-language radio programs -- and several talk-show hosts -- urged her not to go.

Late Wednesday, Martinez told The Herald that she would perform in her native land even at the risk of losing her four-year promotional contract with the **hospital**. She was being pressured not to go, and several commercials she filmed for the **hospital** last month in Miami were being used as leverage, she said.

"I've worked for Repertorio Espanol for 17 years, whereas my commercial work for Pan American is only occasional," she said. "I'm not going to quit my permanent job just because someone gets cross over my trip to **Cuba**."

The **hospital** was to run the commercials on WLTV-Channel 23 and WSCV-Channel 51. Radio spots were to be broadcast over WAQI-Radio Mambi (710 AM).

"Some friends of mine called to say that [some people] were phoning the **hospital** to complain about the trip and that the **hospital** wanted to know if I was indeed going to **Cuba**," Martinez said. "If those people want to tie someone to the stake, I'll quit the commercials."

Also on Wednesday, Martinez said she had received some calls from Miamians who accused her of being a communist for going to **Cuba**.

``I've spent 38 years in exile, and I've always been very honest and very clear," she said. ``I won't allow anyone to call me a communist because I've never been one."

Martinez left **Cuba** in 1960 with her daughter and settled in New York City. She has not returned to the island since.

``I have family there whom I want to see," she said. ``This is a business trip."

Tejidor, of Pan American **Hospital**, said Thursday that he had been unable to speak to Martinez.

``We've been trying since yesterday to reach her, but she hasn't returned our calls," he said, adding that the **hospital** was not forcing her to drop her travel plans.

``We believe it's a matter of freedom of choice," he said. ``Mrs. Martinez Casado has the freedom to do what she likes, and we have the freedom to cancel the commercials."

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