

BARDOLY, Louis S., M.D

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BUDAPEST SATIRE LIMPS INTO WEST

Producer's Ordeal Great
in Moving a Play

Special to The New York Times
LONDON, Oct. 30.—A Hungarian-born American has managed to transfer a Communist satire to the West, but his ordeal may deter others from trying the same.

The play, "U Nadrag," or "The Trousers," has been the hit of Budapest for nearly a year and has played more than 150 performances in Moscow.

An adaptation has been playing in the British provinces for two weeks, but Britons are seeing only a skeleton version because the Hungarian authorities insisted that the anti-Government flavor be removed before it could be shown in the West.

Now named "The Importance of Being Dressed," the play has been transformed from a biting commentary on Communist bureaucracy to what one critic called "a song music hall sketch."

The producers, who are negotiating for a West End showing, have been engaged in their own farce with Hungarian authorities since last spring. Their troubles are not over.

The man who brought the play to the West is Dr. Louis

S. Bardoly, a surgeon and playwright who gave up medicine for the theater.

Educated in Budapest, he was a surgeon in Cleveland for 15 years until 1946 when he moved to Long Island "to be closer to the theater." Dr. Bardoly relinquished his practice in 1955 after fracturing his neck in a fall.

Last spring Dr. Bardoly flew to Budapest to visit relatives. They recommended that he see "Nadrag" and the next day he made his bid for the play.

Officials at the Government copyright office refused to sell the international rights at first, saying that the play, as it stood, could not be exported to the West.

Dr. Bardoly said, "They told me that French and West German producers also were interested, but they, too, had been turned down." He then offered to rewrite the play "in an American or English atmosphere" and the Hungarians agreed.

The story focuses on a businessman whose promotion is threatened because he hasn't any trousers to wear and cannot attend a crucial company meeting. The locale is an apartment he has furnished for his mistress and the trousers are successively soiled, soaked, scalded, lost and replaced.

In Budapest, this simple story line provided an opportunity for the author, Ferenc Dunal, to comment on the Communist factory hierarchy, the promotion system, the equality of sexes (in the Communist version, the mistress pays half the

rent) and other foibles of Hungarian life.

Once having changed the locale to Sloane Square (it will be Sutton Place in New York), "we had to remove the Communist satire because it would be meaningless in a British setting," Dr. Bardoly said.

"We changed about half the play and completely rewrote the third act, which was straight Communist argument," he added. The play now contains neither political nor social commentary.

Dr. Bardoly began his adaptation in New York, but soon learned that the angry author was insisting on a "word-for-word translation." His objections carried no legal weight, the contract having been drawn up with the copyright office, but Mr. Bardoly flew back to Budapest.

"We spent six frustrating days," Dr. Bardoly said, and

eventually parted with the adapter promising to do what he could to maintain the integrity of the original production.

Next week the author is scheduled to arrive here to see what the play looks like. He will see it in Bath, where it will be playing after a week each in Richmond and Nottingham.

One member of the producing staff said that the laughs were still in the same places, and this might mollify the 29-year-old-playwright, who is apparently still under the impression that the play has undergone a literal translation.

So far the critics have not been enthusiastic about Dr. Bardoly's adaptation. The Nottingham Guardian Journal said, "It is predictable, elementary and done at shouting level, but very good fun."