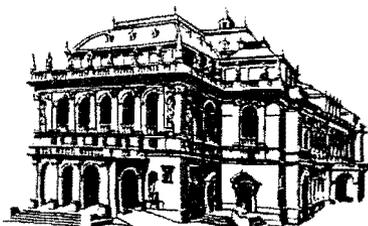


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Letter to the Editor

Forget your manners if you're getting mugged

Thanks to an article in *The Budapest Sun* (Insight, Sept. 16-22), I managed to avoid being robbed on the yellow metro line. One of your writers had reported on his theft on the yellow line near Oktogon while surrounded in a section of the train by a group of young men.

On Oct. 7, I was about to board a nearly empty car on the yellow line at Hősök tere when a young man in a jogging suit pointed in the direction I was going and asked simply, "Oktogon?" I tellingly answered in an English/Hungarian mixture and boarded the car, closely followed by my questioner. I immediately found myself in a rush-hour vise, surrounded by approximately six young people,

including at least one woman. But over their shoulders, I could see that the rest of the car was wide open. I tried to move toward the open space, but they were passively unyielding. Then I recalled *The Sun* story and realized my situation.

I placed my hand on my wallet pocket and tightened my grip on the bag I was carrying. Fortunately, the train doors were still open, and only one gang member stood between me and the empty platform. So I pushed out onto the platform and safety. Instead of leaving the station, I defiantly (and perhaps foolishly) stepped back into the car through the adjacent door, which was still open. The frustrated gang was still bunched together at the other end of the car. Their prey gone, they walked out the still open door, and the train finally left the station. After I arrived at my flat, I opened

last week's new issue of *The Budapest Sun* and read a letter to the editor from a Finnish citizen replying to the same article that I had read. Earlier in the summer, she and a British acquaintance in separate incidents had been similarly victimized by gang thievery on the yellow line.

So be wary on the yellow line. Study the people waiting to board and suspect any predominantly male group from 18 to 28 years of age. Be particularly careful if one engages you in conversation. Hungarians are very courteous, so if you find yourself being rudely squeezed, you are in trouble. If you can't extricate yourself from the situation, you might yell. If you remain polite, you are probably going to be robbed.

Kenneth Janda
Budapest