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## Britons have let state accrue power

*From Mr Saul Eslake.*

Sir, As an occasional visitor to the UK I am accustomed to encountering different, and usually more intrusive, "security" practices each time I travel in this country. But I was taken back today when, in the course of flying from Heathrow to Edinburgh, I was required to be photographed twice - once just before passing through security, and again just before boarding my flight.

While this procedure wasn't especially time-consuming (particularly by comparison with other, longer-established aspects of the "security pantomime" that travellers have had to endure over the past 13 years), the purpose of it seems mystifying.

Not even the Americans - who are now notoriously anal about many of their "security" rituals - deem it necessary to take two consecutive mugshots of all their airline passengers.

Each time I visit the UK, I am amazed by the readiness with which the British people have acquiesced in the state's acquisition of ever-greater powers of surveillance over their lives. CCTV's on every corner; every visit to a website and every mobile phone call logged by a security agency; more full-on pat-downs at airports than almost anywhere else in the world. Just like *Nineteen*

*Eighty-Four.*

As an avid reader of George Orwell in my younger days, I can't help but wonder what he would think of what his country has become.

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