

Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

This week: Words about the Cold War

蘇

Pronunciation: *su* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *so* (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: revive,
transliteration of “so” in “soviet”

沙皇 (*Sha huang* = “Czar”-transliterated-emperor) ruled 俄羅斯 (*E Luo Si* = “Russia”-transliterated = 俄國 *E Guo* = 俄-state) until 十月革命 (*shi yue ge ming* = tenth-month-change-fate = October Revolution, 1919).

蘇維埃 (*su wei ai* = “soviet”-transliterated) means elected council in 社會主義共和國 (*she hui zu yi gong he guo* = socialism-republic-state). Westerners called 蘇聯 (*Su Lian* = “Soviet”-transliterated ~Union = Union of Soviet Socialist Republics = USSR) 鐵幕 (*tie mo* = iron-curtain). 美蘇 (*Mei Su* = US-Soviet) military contention continued until 1991. Chinese term “蘇東波” (*Su dong bo* = Soviet-east-wave) means eastward flux of western political/democratic influence), ending in USSR’s 解體 (*jie ti* = loosen/free-body = dissolution/disintegration).

by Diana Yue