

Zhang freed after weeks of detention

From **GEOFFREY CROTHALL** in Shanghai

DISSIDENT journalist Zhang Weiguo has been released from detention after being held at a military camp near the Baoshan Iron and Steel Works on the outskirts of Shanghai.

Zhang returned to his family's apartment on Wednesday evening after being held at a military camp near the Baoshan Iron and Steel Works on the outskirts of Shanghai.

Although the 35-year-old former Beijing bureau chief of the now-disbanded *World Economic Herald* is clear of detention, he is not yet a free man. He was "released on bail pending further investigation" and has to report to a public security bureau when summoned.

He has no job, no income and is not permitted to leave Shanghai.

"I have been told not to talk to foreign journalists but I told the police there is no law against receiving visitors," Zhang said yesterday.

During his three-week detention at a public security bureau compound within



Zhang Weiguo

the military camp where he was the only detainee, Zhang was not allowed visits from his family and could not contact them by telephone.

"I spent my time reading books and the *Liberation Daily* newspaper," he said.

Zhang was interrogated on the activities of dissident groups in the city but told his questioners that he had had no contact with such people.

"They also asked me about articles I had written for the Hongkong newspaper *Ming Pao* and an interview I did with the BBC," he said.

Zhang has written for the newspaper about his days in jail and the suffering of dissidents, including writer Wang Ruowang.

"In addition they wanted to know about the book I was writing about Qin Benli [the late editor-in-chief of the *World Economic Herald*] and the contacts I had with foreign diplomats in Shanghai," he added.

Speaking in a small cafe downstairs from his family's apartment, Zhang appeared to be in good health but said he still suffered from heart problems.

Zhang spent 20 months in prison for his alleged involvement in the 1989 pro-democracy movement.

He was re-arrested on July 30 at his uncle's home in Yingshan village, Zhejiang, after the police sent 45 officers to track him down.

"It was really frightening when these guys burst into the house, breaking down the back door in the process," he said.

"My uncle got a lot of trouble from the authorities after that."

Zhang fled to his uncle's house on June 27 in an attempt to avoid police harassment.