

Women Take To The Street

For the second year running women in Chile are planning street protests to mark International Women's Day on March 8. Last year, Chile Solidarity Campaign sent a group of women from the British labour movement to Chile, to discover the part women were playing in the struggle against repression and to show solidarity with them in celebrating Women's Day.

Women from the Santiago shanty towns, women street sellers, the relatives of the 'disappeared' and women in the opposition parties all came together to organise the March 8 rally. This was the first serious challenge to Pinochet in 1986 and consequently the vast resources of

the military and police machines were deployed against it.

Soldiers and police in full riot gear, with machine guns, threatened and abused unarmed women. Tear gas, sewage-spewing water cannon and beatings were the authorities' response to the women's demands of 'no more, because we are more'.

This year Lord Gifford will be in Chile, able to monitor the government's reaction to the women's protests. He has been sent by the International Human Rights Federation to investigate the treatment of the five men jailed last September for an attempt on Pinochet's life

The Pope will also be visiting the country in early April, an occasion certain to attract large crowds. The opposition will be using that focal point to express dissent. It remains to be seen whether the Pope will choose to bless the status quo. •

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