

Dublin rally calls for end to killing

Owen Bowcott in Dublin

BENEATH the Post Office in O'Connell Street, Dublin, where the 1916 Easter uprising began, thousands of demonstrators gathered yesterday to oppose violence.

Between 10,000 and 15,000 people, many carrying young children, filled one of Europe's broadest streets to listen to speeches from peace activists and religious leaders outraged at the death of three-year-old Johnathan Ball in the IRA's Warrington bombing. The rock singer Sinead O'Connor sang.

The woman who inspired the protest, Susan McHugh, aged 37, condemned both republican and loyalist killings. She told the meeting: "Last week I said of the violence that enough was enough. I wish to rephrase that now: enough was far too much. I want to ask those people who perpetrated these violent acts — what have they achieved?"

"All I can see is a trail of misery and devastation."

Charley Rose, of Mothers Against Murder and Aggression, said she had felt motivated to take part after realising it could easily have been her 16-month-old son who was killed in Warrington.

Paul Smyth, from the Peace People in Belfast, said the

choice of the Post Office in O'Connell Street represented a challenge to the tradition of blood sacrifice in Irish history.

"It's just possible there will be another uprising this Easter," he said. "The world is watching us today at this highly symbolic location."

Michael Nugent of New Consensus said the movement — Peace '93 — will aim to hold meetings in both Northern Ireland and also the Republic. There will be a national day of action next Sunday and a plebiscite on violence is planned.

Republicans protesting against yesterday's meeting were booed and escorted to the fringe of the crowd.

The republican movement's response to the widespread criticism has been low-key. Last week's Republican News carried a story deploring the IRA's killings at Warrington. "Warrington will be remembered by republicans because of the human cost and because of the cost to their struggle," it said.

● The security services are collecting information on members of Red Action, a Trotskyist group. MI5 and the Metropolitan police Special Branch believe it contains supporters of Irish republican violence, writes Richard Norton-Taylor.

Anti-terrorist squad officers in London recently made a number of arrests on suspicion that individuals connected with Red Action have had contacts with the IRA or the Irish National Liberation Army.

The IRA has been wary of links with British left extremists, and Red Action officially does not support terrorism.