

'Murder' used in plot against cult author

by Richard Palmer

THE AUTHOR of a new book on the Church of Scientology cult has become the victim of a bizarre plot to link him to the murder of a communist pop singer.

Russell Miller, whose book, *Bare Faced Messiah: The True Story of L Ron Hubbard*, is to be serialised shortly in *The Sunday Times*, is being investigated by private detectives trying to link him to the death last year of Dean Reed, an American singer who defected to the Soviet bloc.

Miller, who can go ahead with the publication of his book after winning a court case in London against the Church of Scientology last week, is facing the new attempt to discredit him three months after an attempt was made to frame him for the murder of a south London private detective.

In July police questioned him as a suspect in the murder after receiving an anonymous tip-off from someone who used an extensive knowledge of Miller's work and private life to try to frame him.

Miller, a former *Sunday Times* journalist, believes the same people are responsible for the latest attempt to link him to the death of Reed. "There are teams of private detectives in the US and this country questioning my friends and trying to discredit me," he said.

Reed, 47, who was reviled in the US after he defected in 1972, was found drowned in mysterious circumstances the

day before Miller was due to interview him for *The Sunday Times Magazine* in East Berlin in June last year.

Reed's family, convinced that he was murdered because he was planning to defect back to the West, has launched a \$2.5m law suit in the US against the East German authorities. The family has been interviewed by private detectives who have a mysterious backer with a particular interest in linking Miller to the death.

Last week, Reed's first wife, Patricia, said: "They wouldn't say who they were working for. We were just told it was someone with a lot of money who was prepared to help."

Peter Comras, another American private investigator claiming to represent the family, was in London last week interviewing friends, colleagues and relations of Miller.

The Reed family said they had never heard of Comras or his boss, a Washington lawyer called Keith Adkinson.

Comras said he was trying to discover whether Reed was murdered and he was treating Miller as a suspect. But he denied that he was working for the Church of Scientology. "I think they are a bunch of screwballs. If I'm not working for the family, I don't know who the clients are," he said.

Miller said yesterday: "This is absolutely ridiculous. I arrived in East Berlin after Dean Reed died. So I couldn't possibly have had anything to do with his death."