

## UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE PARTY. PATRIARCH JUSTINIAN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE ATHOS MILLENNIUM FESTIVITIES, 1963

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**Abstract:** The present study explores the connections between two seemingly contradictory realities with very little chance of intersecting: a communist regime in Eastern Europe and monastic life on Mount Athos. In 1963, it was a thousand years since the foundation of the first monastery on Athos, the Monastery of the Great Lavra, by Saint Athanasius the Athonite. On this occasion, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, in collaboration with the Orthodox Church of Greece and the Monasteries of Mount Athos organized two days of festivities to which they invited delegates from all Orthodox churches, who were joined by representatives from the Catholic Church, the Anglican Church, Protestant Churches, theologians, professors and journalists. In this context, the presence of a Romanian Orthodox Church delegation, led by Patriarch Justinian, was natural, but it did not represent a simple trip to a meeting between churches, it did not take place within the limited framework of a strictly ecclesiastical and theological action, because the communist regime in Bucharest was very interested in the whole event. Therefore, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Cults were tasked with documenting, presenting analyses, evaluating not only the anniversary meeting, but the entire issue of the monasteries of Mount Athos. The celebration of the Athos millennium and the participation of a Romanian Orthodox Church delegation provided the opportunity for Romania, under the communist regime, to rediscover the medieval tradition of supporting the Athonite monasteries and reaffirm patronage rights in those places. On the other hand, the same institutions of the regime, through the studies and analyses they carried out on this occasion, described a dramatic situation of these monasteries and the Romanian presence in Athos, all caused by the dominant presence of the Greeks. Finally, the study also demonstrates that the Romanian Orthodox Church's participation in the festivities was not viewed lightly by the Romanian authorities, with certain concerns regarding the meetings, statements and initiatives that Patriarch Justinian might have had.

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