

Ocasio-Cortez on “Meet the Press”: Double-talk, evasion and a disavowal of socialism

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2 July 2018

In the wake of her upset victory in last Tuesday’s Democratic primary election for the 14th Congressional District of New York, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), has fallen all over herself attempting to reassure the ruling class that she represents no threat to its interests.

Ocasio-Cortez defeated the fourth-ranking Democrat in the US House of Representatives and head of the Queens, New York, Democratic Party, Joseph Crowley. The 28-year-old former Bernie Sanders campaign operative handily defeated the incumbent Crowley by presenting herself as a working-class advocate and capitalizing on widespread disgust with the Democratic Party establishment.

On Sunday, Ocasio-Cortez was a featured guest on NBC News’ “Meet the Press” program. Her performance made clear why she has received such positive coverage from media outlets such as the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post* and most cable and broadcast networks. On the same day as Ocasio-Cortez appeared on “Meet the Press,” the *Times* ran no fewer than four major articles on her, including a front-page report, the lead editorial, an op-ed column by Maureen Dowd and a long, glowing feature by Michelle Goldberg under the headline “The Millennial Socialists Are Coming.”

“Meet the Press” host Chuck Todd began by hailing Ocasio-Cortez as a “giant killer,” herald of a “changing Democratic Party” and new spokesperson for the party’s “progressive wing.”

He then played a tape of House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi dismissing Ocasio-Cortez’s win as insignificant and inviting his guest to make a rejoinder. She demonstratively refused, replying semi-coherently:

“Well, I think that there are a lot of districts in this

country that are like New York 14, that have changed a lot in the last 20 years and whose representation has not. And it’s not to say whether someone should be voted out or voted in, but I think it definitely speaks to perhaps us evolving in our messaging and at least how we do things.”

At the conclusion of the interview, Todd came back to the question of Pelosi, seeking to pin down Ocasio-Cortez as to whether she would support the removal of the right-wing incumbent as leader of the House Democrats.

Ocasio-Cortez replied: “You know, once again, I want to see the options on the table. First of all, I’m not even an elected member of Congress yet. Secondly, we need to see what is going on. I think that it’s just premature for me to commit to any kind of decision on this. I was just elected on Tuesday, Chuck.”

Next, Todd asked whether Ocasio-Cortez would advocate a different course in opposing Trump’s impending nomination of a far-right justice to the Supreme Court than the capitulatory posture adopted by the Democratic congressional leadership. Ocasio-Cortez attempted to evade answering with a round of double-talk, but finally, under pressure from Todd, declared:

“So I would like the Senate to delay, absolutely. We need to delay until after the midterm elections. That’s my personal opinion. And I think that, at the very least, if we are going to—if this appointment is going to happen, the very least we can do is delay the timeline in which women’s healthcare is going to be taken away, delay the timeline in which our civil rights could potentially be further eroded.”

In other words, offer an impotent protest but do nothing serious to block the nomination of a justice who will likely provide the vote needed to overturn the

legal right to abortion and rubber-stamp authoritarian methods of rule.

Most revealing was the exchange that occurred when Todd asked about Ocasio-Cortez's supposed socialist convictions:

Todd: "What is your definition of democratic socialist?"

Ocasio-Cortez: "Well, for me, again, and there's so much focus on this [the DSA's] endorsement. But I also think it's important that an important part of my strategy in winning was building a broad based coalition of people. So while there's the focus on this one aspect of the coalition and to me, you know, to answer your question, the definition of democratic socialism to me, again, is the fact that in a modern, moral and wealthy society, no American should be too poor to live. And to me, that means every working-class American in this country should have access to dignified healthcare. Should actually be able to see a doctor without going broke. It means you should be able to send your kids to college and trade school if they so choose. And no person should feel precarious or unstable in their access to housing as our economy develops."

Following this downplaying of the DSA's endorsement and boilerplate recitation of Democratic Party rhetoric, Todd pressed his guest again on the issue of socialism. In response, Ocasio-Cortez cited as her authority none other than Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer of New York, known as the "senator from Wall Street:"

Ocasio-Cortez: "Well, I think, you know, as the clip from Schumer showed earlier, Democrats are a big tent party. You know, I'm not trying to impose an ideology on all, you know, several hundred members of Congress. But I do think that, once again, it's not about selling an -ism or an ideology or a label or a color. This is about selling our values."

Todd pressed for an even more direct disavowal of socialism, and got it. Here is the exchange:

Todd: "Are you a democratic socialist? Is that what you'd call yourself or you don't want that label?"

Ocasio-Cortez: "I mean, it's part of what I am. It's not all of what I am. And I think that that's a very important distinction. I'm an educator. I'm an organizer. And I believe that what we're really seeing is just a movement for healthcare, housing and

education in the United States."

Double-talk and evasion are the tools of bourgeois politicians whose careers depend on deceiving working people into voting for their class enemies. They are not the methods of socialists. Socialists tell the truth and seek to reveal the real relations of capitalism and the real, revolutionary, implications of the struggles into which workers are driven.

Ocasio-Cortez's duplicity and political opportunism brand her—and the DSA—as reactionary instruments of the oppressors and exploiters of the working class and youth.



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