

Trump Surfaces, Pence Suspends at Republican Jewish Coalition



by Roger L. Simon

The Oct. 28 plenary session of the Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC) with all the Republican candidates speaking had two dramatic events and several rousing speeches.

The first dramatic event was the suspension of Mike Pence's campaign announced by the former vice president himself.

One can't help but think this was related to his problem making the cut for the next debate. He was said to be having trouble making the minimum on numbers of contributors.

The second, of course, was the appearance of His Majesty the

Donald who, abjuring the debates, hitherto had not appeared on the same stage with the other candidates, but is speaking here, serially, if not at the same time.

Each candidate was given 25 minutes, supposedly in a randomized order, but excuse me for being suspicious that Trump somehow ended up speaking last.

Comparisons were likely to be made. We're only human.

The house was packed and then some with well over a thousand people—perhaps a small crowd in Trumpian terms but substantial in a ballroom, even one at the Vegas-sized Venetian.

Part of the reason for the turnout was obviously the war in Israel in conjunction with the highly disturbing domestic rise in anti-Semitism, in the streets and on our campuses.

For all speakers, that war and the anti-Semitism constituted a clear battle between good and evil, as they were for the previous introductory night's speakers, notably Arkansas Gov. Sarah Sanders and Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.).

What follows are my quicky reviews of how the candidates performed. This is, I remind you, is an opinion column (yours may differ) if you caught this on the NTD stream or in another way.

Vivek Ramaswamy

I know Vivek best perhaps from spending several days with him on his campaign bus, in part for our "Presidential Roller Coaster" video series.

As always, the man gave an intelligent speech, replete with detailed references to Israeli history, some of which he knows better than I do.

He traced the recent rise in anti-Semitism to the

pervasiveness of “woke” in our campuses and media, an idea worth exploring, though I think it is only part of the story.

The self-admitted elephant in the room for Mr. Ramaswamy was the recent unfair accusations leveled against him concerning his seemingly isolationist views—or you might call them neo-isolationist since they are more complex.

On the other hand, he believes Israel is quite capable of handling the Hamas terrorist group by itself, which is probably true as long as the ammunition holds out.

Grade: B- (best in food for thought, but didn't help his campaign)

Tim Scott

Tim Scott (R-S.C.) gave a rabble-rousing, church-y speech that brought the audience to its feet. He focused, justifiably, on the outrageous behavior on our campuses, high and low, promising to defund them. (He wasn't the only candidate to do that and it was universally met with sustained applause.)

Took on Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.), whom he described as an “extension of Hamas propaganda.”

Grade: B (may have helped, but only marginally)

Chris Christie

He seemed tired, but maybe it was just me. I wonder why he is doing this other than his well-known enmity for Trump, which he omitted from his speech other than a rather veiled reference to Charlottesville.

Still, an experienced pol, he knows the issues and, other than fellow candidate Nikki Haley, seemed the most determined interventionist.

Grade C+ (why?)

Doug Burgum

Many still don't know who North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum is, and there were walkouts before he spoke. Nevertheless, he gave one of the better speeches, touching many bases beyond the necessary Israeli War issues. He focused especially on energy policy, sounding a bit like President Trump in policy but in a more business-like manner.

His foreign policy views were predictable and relatively hawkish—enforce Iran sanctions, etc.—except for one I'd never heard before: to designate Qatar as a state sponsor of terrorism. They certainly are. He also supports the Taylor Force amendment, axed by Biden, and wants to defund the The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

I will be interviewing Mr. Burgum for [the Roller Coaster](#) shortly.

Grade B+ (though it probably won't matter)

Mike Pence

Suspended campaign, as noted.

Ron DeSantis

The Florida governor got the warmest welcome so far accompanied by a video montage of his many accomplishments in his home state. (All animals are not equal, as Orwell told us.)

Giving the man his due, he stepped up immediately following Oct. 7, even arranging flights for Americans, and some others, to escape the warzone before our federal government had even

gotten his boots on.

He didn't stand for anti-Semitism in the schools either. He deactivated the Students for Justice in Palestine, who were spewing pro-terrorist propaganda in Florida colleges, and obtained funding to protect synagogues and other Jewish facilities.

The rap against DeSantis is that he is not charismatic—who cares—and that he might be a lackey of the old guard through PACs.

I keep an eye on the latter, but so far he sounds remarkably like Trump in his policies and has actually walked the walk, for the most part, in Florida.

I'm with those who still wonder why the two men are not running together. It's not too late.

Grade B+

Nikki Haley

The former U.N. ambassador and South Carolina governor began with praise for the departed Mr. Pence.

Was she sincere? Don't ask me.

The woman was overall the most overtly hawkish, spending a great deal of time linking the defense of Ukraine with the defense of Israel.

Some of this, of course, makes sense because the same evil players—China, Russia, Iran, North Korea—are linked against the good guys, our side, in both conflagrations. That's obvious.

Nevertheless, an astounding amount of money has been spent by the United States on Ukraine to little avail—something she did not mention.

Also, she ignored the question of how the Ukrainian money was being spent, and by whom. It would be interesting to hear how she would answer that.

Still she equipped herself well and certainly knows her foreign policy.

Grade B (waiting for her performance in early states)

Donald Trump

All of a sudden everyone's standing up and screaming as if Mick Jagger is in the house—although with this crowd Mr. Jagger would have gotten far less attention.

President Trump, as everyone knows, is a force of nature, unlike any politician in our lifetimes.

He knows it, of course, and it can be a little irritating. Still, he was far and away the favorite of this conference, as he is of almost every group of Republicans not directly related to the Bush family.

He noted the same points as all the other speakers but added what we all know—he had already done them; they hadn't.

He informed us that he was the best friend Israel ever had, and it was hard to disagree—the Abraham Accords, the Jerusalem embassy, the Golan Heights, and so forth.

He made the claim there was world peace during his four years—basically true—and that went to pieces almost immediately after he left—basically true again.

We had heard this all before, but the audience still loved it.

Why?

It struck me that a great deal of Trump's genius—and it is a kind of genius—is an uncanny ability to be funny and

entertaining about almost anything. He did it at the RJC.

Grade A (what else?)

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