



Political Notebook by George Pascoe-Watson

Gordon Brown will almost certainly ask The Queen to dissolve Parliament on April 6 - kicking off the 2010 General Election campaign with polling day on May 6.

MPs returning from their Easter break will be given four or five days to "wash-up" and push through unfinished Commons business.

Then a three week battle will commence with the TV debates the highlight and possible clinchers for the PM, David Cameron and Nick Clegg.

Looking at her diary, Her Majesty may have to reschedule events to greet Mr Brown in Buckingham Palace.

She's due to be throwing a party for the Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation in Windsor Castle and I'm certain the PM won't want to travel far that day.

The opinion polls are suggesting we are facing a hung Parliament.

But I think it's unlikely. Brits don't vote for hung Parliaments.

This general election will be fought and won in the marginal seats where tactical voting by Labour and LibDem supporters has kept the Tories out of power since 1997.

That tactical voting will unwind this time because Mr Cameron has succeeded in detoxifying the Conservative brand.

Sure, the Tories need to win 117 extra seats on polling day just to have a working Commons majority of one.

But a poll this week showed they've already got 97 in the bag.

And they didn't even poll in the seats where the LibDems are fighting the Conservatives. Many believe there are plenty more seats in amongst that lot.

I also expect Mr Cameron to wipe the floor with Mr Brown in the TV debates.

Of course, anything could happen on the night - they're live and they last for 90 unedited minutes.

But we know the PM is very uncomfortable on the TV, and Mr Cameron loves the cameras.

Something very odd would have to happen for the PM to come out on top.

The Tories privately admit they've had a difficult few weeks.

Who'd have thought Gordon Brown being unmasked as an office bully with an insufferable temper would drive Labour's ratings up?

But their fightback begins tonight with just 55 days left to go before P-Day....polling day.



Mr Cameron has put in place his election campaign team and we will see a marked improvement on recent weeks.

George Osborne will be in charge of the entire operation.

Old warrior Ken Clarke will assume many of the shadow chancellor's duties on the economy, ramming home the message that Gordon Brown is to blame for Britain's disastrous finances.

Communications director Andy Coulson has now moved into a glass-walled office in Tory HQ with Steve Hilton, the chief architect of Cameron's Conservatism.

The two men, joined by ex John Major staffer George Bridges, will run the minute-by-minute campaign.

I expect the Tories to get on the front foot this weekend, dominating the headlines after his interview with Sir Trevor Macdonald.

His hour-long documentary is intensely personal and marks Samantha Cameron's first full-scale outing before the cameras.

This is the way back into the media after a very difficult fortnight dominated by the Lord Ashcroft non-dom revelations.

Cameron will roll up his sleeves on Monday and wade into Gordon Brown for his links with the unions.

He will use the PM's failure to condemn the British Airways strikes - led by Unite - to claim Mr Brown is at the beck and call of the barons.

Expect a raft of top Tories to hit the airwaves making the point that 55 Labour MPs are sponsored by Unite.

The campaign message and team at Tory HQ is now settled.

And the strategy - remind the nation they are faced with five more years of Gordon Brown unless they vote Tory.