



Business Machines — in 1955. Its base was Toronto, Canada, where the fledgling company started its manufacturing operation in a modest way by assembling typewriters under licence from Czechoslovakia. He chose the name, it is said, because of its similarity to IBM.

In 1975, after two decades of trading in office products, the company was brought to its knees by the ferocious calculator wars, which the Japanese eventually won. But Tramiel, feared as much as respected for his business methods, was a survivor. He spotted the potential market for a personal computer and in 1976 brought Chuck Peddle into the company and in under a decade saw the value of the company grow 50-fold.

Tramiel has made Commodore into a redoubtable trading and manufacturing operation but, if it has a weakness, it is in new product development. The company's philosophy is 'We sell to the masses, not the classes' and Tramiel's belief has been that the customer will always buy what offers best value for money. The requirements of cheap volume manufacture may militate against incorporation of the most advanced technology. In late 1982 a large

proportion of Commodore's small research and development staff left the company in a mass walk-out, and since then it has relied on buying in the fruits of the researches of other companies. It has entered manufacturing agreements with Far East concerns for disk drives, and has held talks with firms such as Sony to buy in expensive 'fifth-generation' technologies such as voice recognition, home robots and sophisticated storage devices. Commodore even approached Oric's innovative designer Paul Johnson to see if he would design a ULA chip for its new series of home computers.

In 1984 Commodore seems more confident than ever and continues to make a virtue of cheapness and simplicity. It has exhibited two new home computers based on the new 7501 processors and known as the 264 and V364. The latter has a speech synthesiser with a built-in vocabulary of 250 words. In line with current trends, software for word processing, spreadsheet calculation and graphics will be available as an option. The V364 sounds as though it will be an entry into the market for home computers that other micro makers will ignore at their peril.

Commodore Milestones



1982
The elusive **CBM 700** is the much delayed replacement for the 8032 machines that promises to bring Commodore's business machines in line with more modern micros



1981
The **CBM 8032** added an 80-column ability to the PET range, giving it the ability to run serious business software



1984
The **SX64** is an updated version of the 64 in a portable case with a colour screen and disk drive



1983
The **Commodore 64**, having a 40-column screen and a 64K memory, has improved on the restrictions of the Vic



1977
The original **Commodore PET** was the first mass-market personal computer. After numerous updates it is still selling well



1979
The **Vic-20** was Commodore's first cheap home computer, but despite limitations and strong competition is still very popular



1980
The **SuperPET** (or CBM 9000) was an attempt to produce a dramatically changed business version of the PET