

Paris in the Sky

The French, they are discovering the skyscraper. Paris, up-to-date, has the 58-story Maine-Montparnasse building, and promises that true cachet of progress, freeways on both banks of the Seine. It has demolished Les Halles. Pollution turns chestnut trees brown in the spring. The towers of La Défense, the \$2-billion answer to Uris and his brothers, will disrupt the cherished vista of the Arc de Triomphe.

The Manhattanization of Paris has its admirers—businessmen and planners. La Défense has been praised as a kind of coordinated large-scale development that this country is too undisciplined to produce. New York's skyline may be a fortuitous accident, but Paris' is a civilized work of art turning into a catastrophe.

Chers messieurs, if you had only asked. New York can tell you all about skyscrapers. New Yorkers would assure you that big buildings can be seen clearly at a distance, a simply demonstrated truth from New Jersey. We could tell you that the art of the city is a vulnerable thing—and how easy it is to lose a cultural heritage.