

## WHAT IF THE WAR OF THE WORLDS ACTUALLY HAPPENED?

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On Halloween, 1938, a young Orson Wells detailed the terrifying real-time account of a Martian invasion of Earth over the radio. In his fake news broadcast, he described the resulting destruction as our conventional weapons of the era feebly attempted to fight off a technologically superior Martian force, only for the Martians to fall to the natural microorganisms and bacteria in our atmosphere. While the broadcast was part of the Mercury Theater radio show and was just a hoax, it was realistic enough to set off widespread panic as people across the country mistook the drama for the real deal.

But what if the invasion was no hoax? What if the events of that Halloween night had in fact actually happened, and a strike force of Martian war machines fell out of the sky nearly eighty years ago? How would humanity change following the *War of the Worlds*?

For this scenario, we will use the version of the story as narrated by Orson Wells: the Martians are launched earthward via cylinder-shaped projectiles, impacting across the world like meteorites. The Martians pilot towering tripod vessels highly resistant to weapons fire, armed with a devastating heat ray, and those people they don't outright kill they gather as food.

In our timeline, 1938 was a period of great change. The Nazis took the first steps of their reign of terror across Europe with the invasion of Austria, while the U.S. was taking steps to bring itself out of the Great Depression. People were weary of war, and wanted to concentrate on solving their own problems rather than deal with events outside their borders. World War II would change that, and the world we live in today would be shaped by its conflict, politics and drama.

On the heels of an unexpected worldwide Martian blitzkrieg, World War II would end before it even began. Major cities across the planet would be prime targets for the attacks as fast-moving Martians aimed for large population centers, with cities like New York and London left in ruins and depopulated. Despite the severity of this attack, however, the Martian tripods are limited by their ground-travel speed. The radio broadcast makes it clear they lack the ability to fly, and their ability to airdrop forces lacks precision, since they land in low-value locations like Grover's Mill, New Jersey. As the invasion barely lasts a week, it would be unlikely that they would be able to saturate the planet with enough forces to significantly eliminate a majority of the population either. Major leaders like President Roosevelt or Hitler would have enough time to be airlifted out to remote, safe locations while the tripods hoofed it across the countryside. Before the assault can truly begin to stamp out humanity, the common cold finishes them off.

How would this affect the world around us? Well first, the age old question has been answered: *we are not alone*. There is life out there, and it wants to kill us. And eat us. The nations of the world would be forced to put aside their petty differences and galvanize against a common enemy: namely, the planet Mars. War would indeed come to the world, but it would be aimed at the stars as a united front of humanity prepared to destroy their attackers. No nation would remain isolationist, and the Earth would be unified as never before. The Second Sino-Japanese War would come to a halt, as would the Spanish Civil War and Chinese Civil War.

What's left of the Martian forces would be immediately collected by each respective government and dissected: both the tripods, and their pilots. Their technology would be stripped and adapted to service humanity, in particular the Martian heat ray, as well as advanced systems like computers, robotics, generators, and so on. The space program would become the primary industry for the planet, with an emphasis on its application towards war.

With its technological and industrial superiority, the Nazis would use the opportunity to place themselves center stage to the world as its savior, realigning Hitler's nationalistic rhetoric and hatred to instead rally humanity against their nightmarish Martian enemies. Germany had only begun its expansion into Europe, and as such hadn't yet ruined its credibility with the rest of the world. The League of Nations had begun to show itself as a weak and ineffective governing force, so a desperate world would flock to Germany's banner for protection, support, and the unification of the population against a terrible foe. Planet Earth would react as the United States had after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor in our timeline, immediately mobilizing itself for war.

As Martian war machines were deployed in seemingly one-way trips to Earth via giant cannons, humanity would still need to develop safe and effective space travel from scratch, preventing immediate deployment of ground troops to invade Mars itself. However, knowing their vulnerability to disease humanity would undoubtedly develop bio-weapon deployment systems with the intent of eradicating Martians on their home soil. Following the discovery of nuclear fission by German scientist Otto Hahn two months after the Martian attack, the world powers would each begin an arms race to develop the nuclear bomb, the initial intent being for use on the Martians. Once the necessary rocket technology was developed, the Earth would retaliate with a combination of nuclear carpet bombing and biological attacks that would leave Mars a radioactive hellhole. As we are using the 1938 radio broadcast as reference, there were no force fields for the Martians to hide behind, as shown in the later movie adaptations.

Human society would be forever changed. Reverse-engineered Martian technology would set humanity decades ahead of where we currently are scientifically. Evidence of hostile alien forces in the universe would drive mankind to build planet-wide defense systems and find ways to both colonize and conquer space. Moon landings would take place by the late 40s, turning it into a forward defense base. In an effort to "protect" the people, governments would tighten control over their populations, much like the Nazis and Soviet Union had, and until the Martian threat was proven eradicated, this perpetual state of control would continue indefinitely. Whether or not first contact with aliens would result in a united Earth government and the Federation, as it did in Star Trek, is up to debate, but odds are the major powers of the time would be unwilling to give up their respective influences and ideologies, intent that once the Martians were dealt with they would immediately turn their advanced weapons against their original Earth-bound foes.

Follow-up assaults by Mars would be unlikely. Arriving unprepared for natural airborne contaminants, the Martians demonstrated that bacteria was an alien concept to them and would be unable to perfect defenses or sterilization procedures without samples to work with. Having their entire invasion force eradicated by disease in less than a week, Mars would view the Earth as a poisonous nightmare, unfit for populating or exploiting.

Eventually we would find our way to Mars, and Earth would finally get the retribution it sought for decades. Our first step on another planet would not be one of exploration and discovery, but of conquest and revenge, a step that would shape humanity for all time.