

MEN FROM "MARS" LAND 15 YOUTHS IN JAIL

ROME, Thursday.

Fifteen pranksters, who concocted a story about men from Mars landing from a translucent flying saucer, have landed in court.

The 15 youths were charged with spreading false reports after the north Italian town of Tradate had been thrown into a panic by their story of the Martian invasion.

It was reminiscent of the panic-spreading Halloween broadcast by actor Orson Welles in New York 16 years ago.

Police said that the youths agreed on a story that the Martians got out of the flying saucer (made of cellophane) and started talking in a strange tongue that sounded like turkeys gobbling.

Soon all Tradate was talking. Police phones were swamped with calls. Newspapers devoted a full page to the report.

Spate Of Stories

The Milan paper "La Notte" gave it more space than the Salerno flood and the Italian troops marching into Trieste's

Zone A.

The report coincided with a spate of flying saucer stories in Italy.

Some cab drivers, boulevard strollers, a newspaperman and United States Ambassador Clare Booth Luce all reported seeing something that looked like luminous flying disks.

The flying saucer rage continued to burn brightly at Castel Sant' Angela east of Rome. Peasants there said they saw a formation of 15 of the strange things shooting across the sky in a south-east direction.

Tradate police said the 15 youths confessed their story was invented just for a joke, but the authorities were not joking.

They said the pranksters would be disciplined on a charge of spreading false reports.

The charge is a misdemeanor carrying penalties of up to three months in jail and fines up to 24,000 lire.