

On 11 June 1940, in a secret cablegram to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Menzies instructed the British Government to communicate to the Italian Government that Australia was also at war with Italy.

The first Italians to become prisoners-of-war in Australia were the sailors and passengers of Italian ships berthed in Australian ports or sailing in territorial waters. The REMO was captured in Fremantle after its departure had been delayed for days by the Australian authorities on various pretexts. The ROMOLO had sailed from Brisbane on 5 June, however on 12 June she was located in the mid-Pacific by the Royal Australian Navy vessel MANOORA, upon which the ROMOLO was set on fire by her crew and scuttled. The officers, crew and passengers, including two Italian immigrants being deported to Italy, were picked up and interned in the POW camp at Hay, New South Wales.

Italian seamen of the cargo boats FELCE, the Panamanian ATLAS and the Norwegian ANGLO-MAERSK were also captured and interned on the first day of the war. The total number of Italian merchant seamen interned as POWs was 268. Eight women, members of the crews of the vessels ROMOLO and REMO, were not interned, and during the war four of them married British subjects.

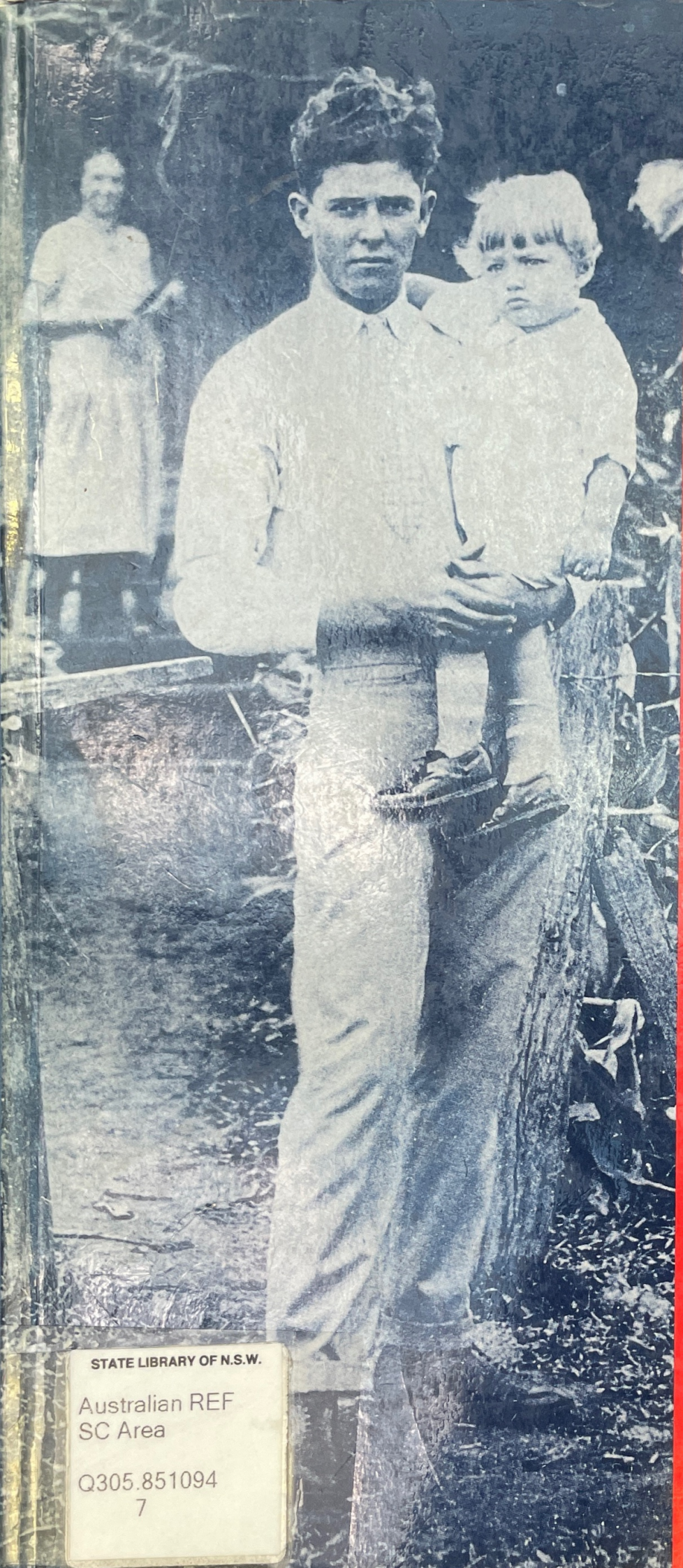
## DOCUMENT

# 55

### THE SCUTTLING OF THE ITALIAN PASSENGER SHIP ROMOLO

### L'AFFONDAMENTO DELLA NAVE PASSEGGERI ITALIANA ROMOLO





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