

continue to practice successfully in various areas of Geology. For many years, he was the Director of the Course of Geological Studies and was also the Head of the Department of Geological and Paleontological Sciences at Ferrara University for three years. He was elected as an original member of the Board of the newly formed National Order of Geologists. He co-ordinated the first Italian doctorate in Applied Geology. He was also a member of the National Group for the Defense against Hydrogeological Catastrophes of the National Research Council.

As a geologist, he did not limit his work to research and academic formation; he also worked practically in Applied Geology. He conducted many field campaigns and provided the studies for the stabilization of numerous slopes, primarily in the Province of Belluno and in the eastern Alps. Among these was the study in the valley of the Tèssina Stream where, as a result of rigorous geological research, he developed the solution of a drainage tunnel which provided a significant contribution to the stability of a large landslide which had threatened several villages in Alpago (Belluno Province) since the 1960's.

During his geological work in the service to his country, Edoardo Semenza was always devoted to the idea, which became particularly clear because of the tragic event of Vaiont, that in order to prevent a natural disaster, it is essential to conduct complete geological studies before beginning the design of any civil engineering project. His publications on Vaiont have provided a noteworthy contribution to two geotechnical engineers, Alfred J. Hendron Jr. and Franklin D. Patton. They were confronted with the feasibility of the construction of a huge dam on the Columbia River between the USA and Canada, where the enormous Downie landslide had been discovered. To carry out their work, they wanted to understand the causes of the landslide of Vaiont. Their knowledge of the Vaiont landslide allowed them to find solutions to prevent a similar risk and permitted the construction of a dam as well.

Authors of photos on cover:  
front: G. De Biasi (August 2001)  
inside front: U. Veronesi (8 September 1996)  
back: R. Urro (21 July 1964)



Edoardo Semenza was the geologist who discovered the Vaiont landslide in August 1959, more than four years before the landslide caused the enormous tragedy. He made the hypothesis, which was unfortunately correct, that the slide could move again once the reservoir had been filled. Edoardo was one of the sons of the engineer who designed the dam.

He kept studying the slide after October 9, 1963, until his death in 2002. Many years after the catastrophe, he gathered all the memories, scientific studies and reflections that he had developed in this book. He wanted to include many unpublished images and to use language comprehensible to all and not just to the few specialists in the field.

From the Preface by Alfred J. Hendron Jr. and Franklin D. Patton:

*“Edoardo’s book is a compelling account of the technical details and the people involved. He was in a unique position to see the many facets of the events as they unfolded. This edition of his book helps to fill in many unresolved details for the English-speaking world.”*

*“Certainly, the book has greatly increased our understanding of events surrounding the slide even though we have been students of the slide for a number of years.”*

*“We think that this excellent book should be required reading for all geotechnical engineers and engineering geologists. Certainly they should know The Story of Vaiont before they become involved with similar projects.”*

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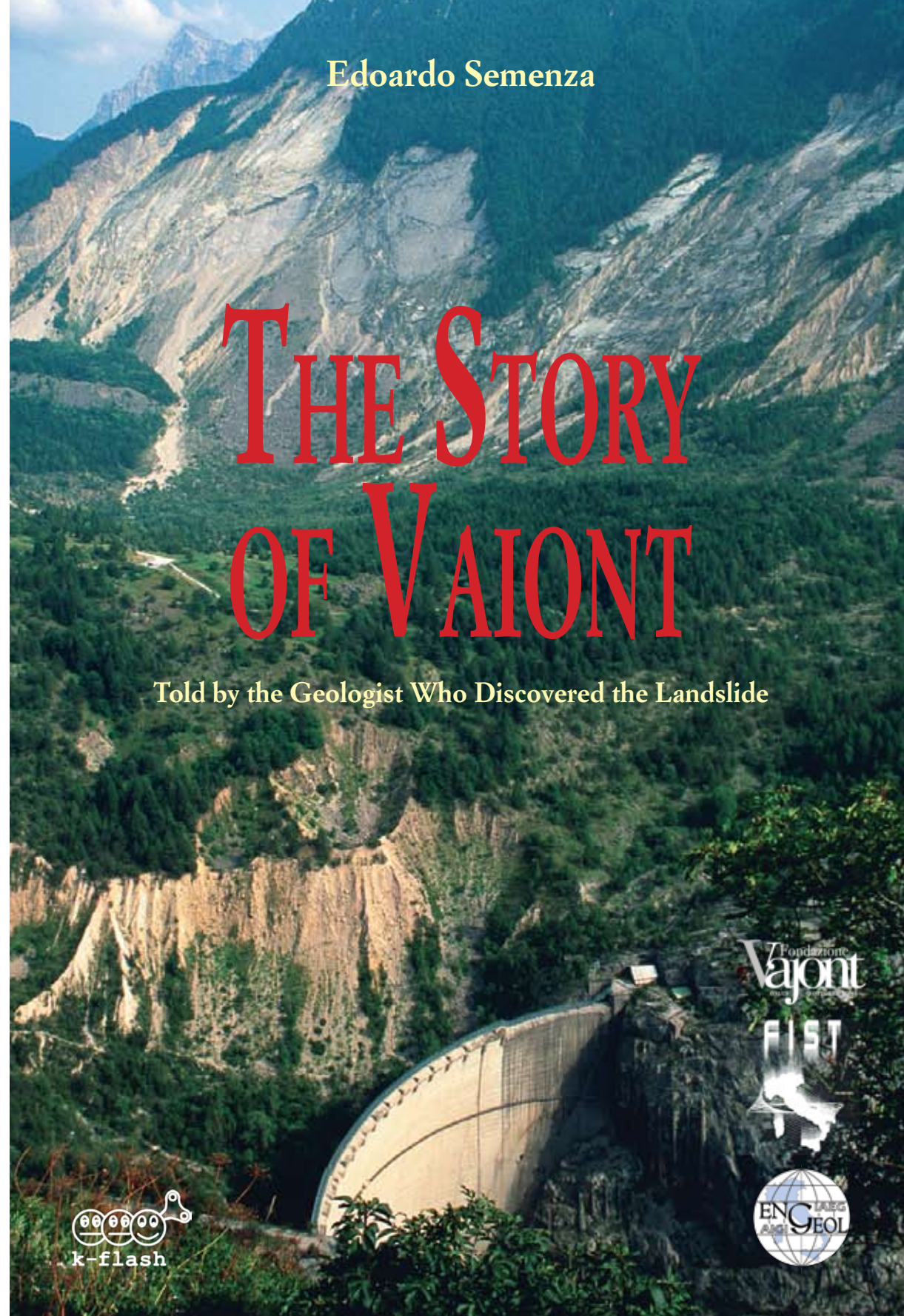
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Edoardo Semenza  
THE STORY OF VAIONT  
Told by the Geologist Who Discovered the Landslide



Edoardo Semenza (1927-2002) was the geologist who discovered the large Vaiont landslide in August 1959, four years before it produced the disaster of October 9, 1963. He was one of the sons of Engineer Carlo Semenza, designer and builder of the Vaiont Dam.

He was born in Vittorio Veneto. Both parents were from Milano. He was raised in Venezia and graduated from Padova University.

For more than forty years, Prof. Semenza taught courses in Geology and especially in Applied Geology. He was the author of a great number of scientific works published both in Italy and in various foreign journals. Many of these studies deal with landslides; among them are: Sintesi degli studi geologici sulla frana del Vaiont dal 1959 al 1964 [Synthesis of Geological Studies regarding the Vaiont Landslide from 1959 to 1964] (1965), La grande frana di Ancona del 1982 [The Huge Ancona Slide of 1982] (1983), and Classificazione e nomenclatura dei fenomeni franosi [Classification and Nomenclature of Landslide Phenomena] (1985) published as the President of the National Commission in charge of this study.

His work regarding Vaiont, judged favorably by all, brought the recognition which made him one of the world's major landslide experts. In 1986, at Ferrara University, he organized the International Pennrose Conference on the Vaiont Landslide.

As a professor, he assumed the tutorship of numerous dissertations and contributed to the formation of hundreds of Italian geologists, many of whom