Most histories of the northern sector of the Russian front concentrate on the siege of Leningrad, and focus little attention on the heavy fighting during the Wehrmacht's withdrawal into the Baltic countries. Retreat from Leningrad begins where those books

My Personal Review:
The predominate coverage is the Soviet Offensive of 1944 though the book begins by describing the action in 1943 when the Soviets went from a purely defensive stance to gaining the battle initiative. This initiative was gained in several ways. From the German perspective, Hitler bled AGN by transferring important panzer and infantry divisions from the north to the other two sectors. During 1943, the Leningrad and Volkhov Fronts continually chipped away at German dominance; their gains were modest but they inflicted heavy casualties on the 18th, 16th Armies as well as the 3rd PzA. The Soviets also reinforced their fronts. For example the 2nd Shock Army was moved into Oranienbaum Pocket to assist the Leningrad Front and would play an important role in their breakout in Jan 1944. At the same time on the eastern edge of the sector along the Volkhov River, the Volkhov Front would attack across the river with special emphasis on Novgorod. Further south, the 2nd Baltic Front attacks 16th Army. The air war in this sector is not covered deeply.

Coverage would continue until October 44 when the Soviets pushed the Germans back in a phased retreat that would take the Germans back to the Panther line and several lines behind that to approximately the line where both sides will be at, by the end of the war. The author also shows how Hitler's fanatical attitude about not retreating cost the Army Group many lives. Hitler would wait to give his permission to fall back to the very last minute when the situation was so desperate and the Soviet offensive was at its maxium that falling back would cost the Germans much of its
heavy equipment and ammo. If Kuchler had fallen back weeks earlier to the Panther line where the line was shorter with better defenses when the Soviet assault was just beginning, thousands of lives could have been saved as well as equipment. Reserves could also have been formed which would have allowed the Germans to react quicker to emergencies.

The author has an unusual format to this book and his "Kursk" book that came years later. Mr Newton establishes the foundation of his books by including essays written by German Officers with first hand knowledge of the campaign. After each chapter (the essay), Mr Newton will add conclusions and analysis where needed to complete each chapter. In this book, he has gathered essays from ten contributors. What I find amazing is that the author chooses ten independent works so precisely that the final product would appear as if it was written by one person, having coverage of the campaign without any unsightly gaps. With this method you have the benefit of insight and experience from someone who was actually in battle.

I'm a big fan of this book for the author does a good job of covering the tactical, operational and organizational aspects of this campaign. In addition to the tactical coverage of the key battles, the contributors show the organizational duties of running an army. In chapter two, a 13 point list was given showing what Kuchler and his staff had to complete to ensure his armies could successfully fall back to the Panther line. It was very interesting; there is much more to do than just fighting in running an army in battle. AGN had few reserves by 1944, and throughout the book, it was shown what had to be done in moving forces from one part of the line to another to plug penetrations or to counterattack. Mr Newton also shows the bigger picture than just AGN's sector. He discusses during mid 1944, the success of Operation Bagration had on AGC and on how the two Army Groups became separated when AGC had to fall back and how it made it easier for the Baltic Fronts to attack the southern flank of AGN. Though the Soviets weren't discussed as much as the Germans, their tactical attacks as well as their strategic objectives in this winter offensive were clearly given.

Most chapters included a map. The maps were pretty good and helped the reader follow the action. A decent legend for each map would have been helpful. There were no photos or Index but an Appendix showing a detailed German Order of Battle was included as well as a helpful Bibliography. This book covers deeper into the campaign than some other popular books, going to almost the end of 1944, instead of stopping when the Germans arrived at the Panther line and Leningrad was liberated. It also covers not only the tactical but also the organizational and operational as well. Its a good book and anybody with a serious interest on the demise of AGN should consider this book. Its highly recommended.

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Retreat from Leningrad: Army Group North 1944/1945 (Schiffer Military History Book) by Steven H. Newton - 5 Star Customer Reviews and Lowest Price!