

world is repeat the message: 'If you are going to have sex with more than one partner, and in particular if you are going to have anal sex, then for God's sake use a condom.' And then all they have to do is provide condoms.

Unfortunately, politicians cannot bring themselves to talk about sex and will do anything they can to avoid the subject. American politicians are so averse to the idea of people having sex that they won't give money to any aid programme that promotes the use of condoms. This matches the irresponsibility of Mbeki and his theories about beetroots curing and preventing HIV.

The greatest value of this book is as a case study of how the world's collective political wisdom is hopelessly unable to devise a strategy to defeat a disease that is eminently vulnerable to rational health policies. Pisani argues, quite seriously, that the wisdom of whores contains profound truths about how we deal with HIV/AIDS. What a shame politicians don't think to listen to the experts.

**Misha Glenny's latest book is
McMafia: Crime Without Frontiers**