

INDEPENDENT TRADER NEWSLETTER



Independent Financial Portal
**INDEPENDENT
TRADER**

1 / 2016

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Was the last euphoria the harbinger of a rate cut and QE in the US?

Precisely on 20th January prices of many assets experienced local lows. This goes both for equity markets in developing and developed countries, commodities and precious metals. During next three months, previously expensive markets like American equities rose significantly while very cheap assets – equities in Russia or mining companies – exploded with the growth of 41% and 100% respectively. Everything in just one quarter

Equity markets



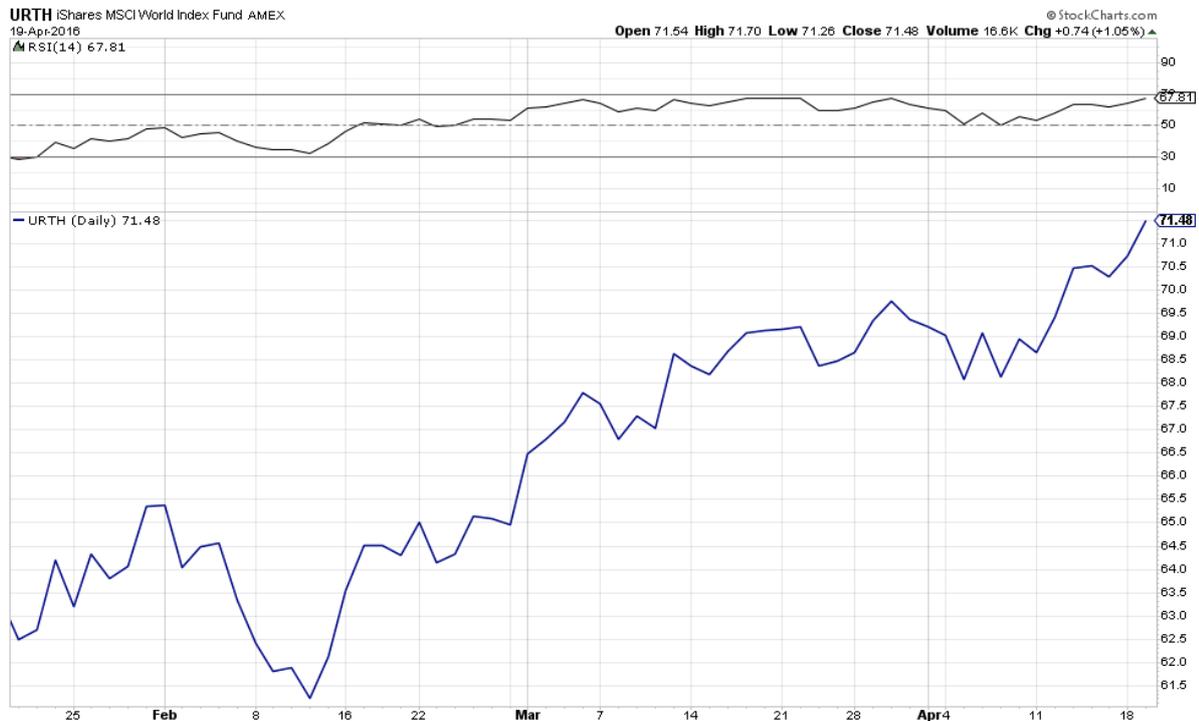
As you know capital never ends up in various markets in perfect proportions. This quarter investors allocated their capital mostly in cheap markets. Expensive equities could get you 13% (black) so a little bit higher than an average of developed markets (14%, blue). In red you can see a very positive climb of developing markets where stock prices started at considerably lower levels. This all pales compared to a fantastic return of Russian market – 41%.

What is the reason of such disproportions between the US and Russia? Firstly, equities in the US were extremely overpriced according to earnings they made. CAPE was equal to 24 vs 4.9 in Russia. P/BV tells a similar story, price over book value for the US was at 2.8 when in Russia below one – 0.8.

You can see that sometimes market corrects disproportions in equities by capital transfers from expensive markets to cheap ones. We can see a resemblance to this situation and Chinese market in mid-2014. Between 2011 and 2013 Chinese equities were losing although, the most markets in the world were booming. In 3 years significant price discrepancies emerged. They balanced themselves at the end of 2014. Why then and not 12 months earlier or later? No one can answer that question.

What we can imply is that in most cases investors after some time spot undervalued assets, invest capital in them and as a result cheap assets ultimately give a decent return, even if you have to wait for it.

Today, after great surge most of equity markets is short-term expensive. Below you can see the price of an ETF giving you exposure to the global (expensive) equity market. Its RSI is nearing 67 and in my opinion, if someone owns shares in developed markets (the USA, Western Europe, Canada, Japan, Australia) this is a good moment to leave.



Commodities

Surge comparable to the one in equities was seen in commodities. [I was writing about them in February](#). Since then RJI (commodity index, blue) rose by 15%, just like gold and silver. Mining agricultural companies gained nearly 38%. The real winners – basically doubling their price – were small mining companies ETF GDXJ (red).



When talking about commodities I highlighted that they are very cheap. What we see now is just a reaction to discounts from last 4 years. Commodities, as you know, are often called an anti-dollar. Whenever the price of USD rises, commodities fall and vice-versa. Last quarter dollar index fell from 100 to 93 (today) and I believe, this trend should continue.

Why am I thinking that USD will weaken?

The first time I flagged the peak of the dollar was in March last year. Right after hiking interest rates in December I also mentioned that. Historical peak dollar reached during first rate increase. Investors in anticipation for the interest rate increase were buying the currency and rate hike discounted it. Buy the rumor, sell the facts. In 2015 dollar index touched 100 after which it was falling. I think that recent discount is due to investors reacting to a certain event. Media will mention that in few months.

I can be wrong but soon the FED will have enough data to argument that the US economy is not that well and interest rates must be lowered. This can be only the beginning. Next move – start printing. Both actions will negatively affect American currency. This is known to those who short dollars. Very important factor – negative for dollar – is Iranian oil being sold for euros. In 2003, Saddam Hussain experimented with this. Three months later Iraq invasion started. Today the US cannot destroy another regime. Politically and militarily the US is a different state than the one from 13 years ago. We saw that in Syria.

In general, if the dollar weakens even further, the boom in commodity markets will pick up speed especially thanks to low levels we are starting from.

Equities in the era of QE

The EBC is printing like mad, following the BOJ. What if the FED joins the line? What if 3 central banks destroying currencies simultaneously can't initiate another boom in equities?

The global economy is in the recession. The velocity of money circulation is dropping. Only part of the printed money ends up in the real economy (financing budget deficit). The majority goes to buy toxic assets from banks or so-called strategic sectors – the US shale sector. The real rate of inflation should not exceed 10%. Today it is at 8%

So expensive equities made in the US should grow at 10%/year minimum? In my opinion, no. Right now they are very expensive and what is even more important, earnings of corporations listed on NYSE are shrinking. NYSE is 45% of combined capitalisation of the global exchanges. If the FED prints, equities should in one year be at the same level as today in the best case scenario.

The situation in developing markets may be quite different. They are considerably cheaper (CAPE 13.7) with Middle-Eastern Europe leading at (CAPE 7.9). Additionally, last two years currencies of many developing countries experienced severe discounts and today they are already visibly cheaper. Mass printing done by the biggest central banks can positively swing investor's mood but this can result in many of them transferring capital to developing markets. Developing markets are allegedly riskier but there are arguments against that accusations. Arguments for better equities' performance in developing markets:

- underpriced equities,
- cheap local currencies,
- lower debt level at every level (private, corporate and public),
- EM vs DM cycles (emerging markets vs developed markets).

Below you can see the table explaining where capital shifted according to respective cycle.

Time	Emerging Markets	S&P 500
1988-1993	545,5%	122,0%
1994-1998	-38,5%	193,9%
1999-2007	420,2%	38,0%
2008-2015	-18,8%	60,0%

Source: Self-made

Pay attention to the periodicity of capital migration. For few years, capital is building up in EM and this results in fantastic surges. After some time equities become too expensive and investors pick DM in next part of the cycle. Capital bounces back and forth between EM and DM in very periodical manner.

Since 2008 the S&P 500 expanded by 60% while EM lost over 18%. We can imply that in few years capital should give much bigger returns in emerging markets.

What about gold?

Gold, silver and mining companies have a negative correlation with the dollar. A weak dollar means climbs in this group of assets. Below I attach a chart showing the dollar index, its power vis-à-vis other main currencies (red) and indices of mining companies (blue) and gold and silver (green). You can say it is nearly perfect, negative correlation.



What is more, printing and ZIRP or NIRP make a perfect environment for metals' price to rise. I said it many times and I will gladly repeat myself. Gold is not an inflation hedge. It is a security against the madness of governments, especially bankrupted ones. Very important: gold records the biggest climbs during real negative interest rates, so when inflation is bigger than deposit or bond interest rates level. This is the situation we see today and it doesn't seem to change soon.

Summary

Last three months were very good for both commodities and equities in developing countries. Industrial materials miners performed great but everything else paled in comparison with mining companies doubling their price. Today we see many assets expensive in short-term and some correction should be in place. This is why I'm not buying any assets for now.

Long-term I am an optimist when it comes to gold, silver, commodities, small mining companies and EM equities. My only position in emerging markets is in Russia. Chinese market caught my attention after a year of falls, it starts to look attractive again. Turkish market is cheap but I expect some Russian retaliation for shooting down a plane few months back. Revenge tastes better when enemy least expect it.

Should I take any position in the near future it would be increasing short position on some extremely overpriced sectors in the US. This is a highly speculative move which I wouldn't advise to people without knowledge and experience. Simply put, in inflationary circumstances, it is easiest to take position in cheap assets. The most important here would be one factor: patience. I'm still holding my cash position: commodity currencies and CHF.

I wish you all next 3 months to be as good as the first quarter, but let's be honest chances for such great results are very small.

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Deutsche Bank admits rigging metals market.

For many years, those who were speaking loudly about the possibility of gold and silver price manipulations were branded tin-foil conspiracy theory seekers.

After the CFTC 5-year investigation was concluded its verdict just cemented the view that there was no manipulation what so ever. You wouldn't expect any other outcome if the head of the agency was a former Goldman employee, would you?

There was plenty of evidence of machinations. Finally, a group of investors stepped forward with a suit against DB. They alleged that with the help of the London Fix, options and futures trade price of metals were rigged.

After few months of investigation, DB agreed to pay the fine and what is more important, to cooperate with authorities and share documents proving other banks' role in the scam. We are talking about HSBC (of course) and Nova Scotia. It is nearly sure that we will hear about other banks soon. Interestingly enough, HSBC while manipulating the price, used cheaper Silver to buy physical metal from polish KGHM.

Many details are unknown and that's evident in media reporting different things. What we know for sure is the fact that precious metals market rigging is officially a reality.

What's next?

Unveiling such a scandal will be very healthy for the market in the long run but in my opinion, there won't be any sudden jumps in price. A Huge majority of cases against banks ends being settled with penalties paid by financial institutions – de facto shareholders themselves. For the real change to come we would need to put the heads of banks in jail. As long as banks get just slap on the wrist (money penalty) there will not be any real change in their behaviour.

More lawsuits against DB

New lawsuits were on their way the moment DB admitted to manipulation. DB, HSBC, Nova Scotia and others are going to be taken to court by class actions of their investors.

Co-owner of Tanzanian Royalty Exploration – Jim Sinclair – is preparing a class action and many of those who lost money are going to join such renowned name. Both mining companies and investors lost money when risking their money in metals, derivative instruments, and mining companies' equities during 2011 – 2015 bull market.

If massive actions against banks were to follow Sinclair's move maybe we are going to get to the bottom of this and end price rigging once and for all. Chances are low and the trial itself will definitely take few years.

Arbitrage and SGE

Few days ago the biggest gold market, the Shanghai Gold Exchange started publishing their own golden fix. London's market competition. China is right now the biggest producer and consumer of gold in the world on top of storing probably the biggest reserves on the planet.

These circumstances are the definition of Chinese drive to exercise bigger control over the price of bullion. What makes SGE different from London Fix or Comex is the fact that China actually deals in physical metal, not in contracts where gold is only written with ink.

In my opinion, investors are going to acknowledge this difference and China's price will be higher. This will make arbitrage possible. Investors may buy a cheaper contract for gold in the US, require delivery of physical collateral and then sell it for more in China. As a result, soon enough there will be no gold in CME and contracts for gold and silver will be suspended. Price control will be gradually given to Asian hands: 'one who has gold makes the rules'.

Summary

This manipulation of price was not about profit. Yes, when the price of metal increased, Commercials increased their short position and then initiated losses. When you know the stop loss levels and enjoy infinite money from central banks it isn't that hard.

I want you to understand the most important part of this. Media by omission is not telling about one more key player – the Bank for International Settlements which coordinates every central bank in the world.

Since 1971, central banks issued only fiat money ('IOU' equivalent). This sort of currency could only survive through a natural devaluation. The society wouldn't be happy about it but to make this process acceptable all major currencies have been destroyed simultaneously. Those who are clever used barometer to understand how their currency is decaying – the price of gold.

In 2008, the system of fiat, paper money collapsed under its weight making gold price harder to manipulate – we see that confirmed in the DB case. I am curious how investigation and penalties will affect the condition of the German giant.

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How to pick countries for future investments?

Equities all over the world are very expensive thanks to three factors: a) increase of money supply by central banks, b) ZIRP and c) central banks' direct purchases of assets. It sounds a little bizarre because the central bank print currency out of thin air and buys equities – something of real value. This is our reality – the Bank of Japan and the Swiss National Bank are already on the record admitting their guilt. It would be naïve to believe they are the only ones breaking the protocol. Ultimately, extraordinary circumstances – extraordinary measures, right?

The result of central banks game is the situation where equity prices are on very high levels notwithstanding the fact of the global economy experiencing serious trouble.

#	Country	CAPE	PE	PC	PB	PS	DY
1	World	19,1	18.7	9.6	1.8	1.2	2.7%
2	Developed countries	20.0	19.3	9.9	1.9	1.2	2.7%
3	Developing countries	13,7	15.2	8.0	1.6	1.2	3.2%
4	Developed countries (Europe)	14.8	23.8	9.2	1.7	1.0	3.5%
5	Developing countries (Europe)	7.9	11.8	4.4	1.0	0.8	3.6%
6	Developing countries (America)	13.8	28.9	9.5	1.8	1.2	2.8%
7	Developing countries(Asia)	14.8	13.9	8.6	1.7	1.3	2.9%

Source: Self-made

The P/E (price/earnings) ratio or CAPE (price/ average of earnings from last 10 years) indicate the level of speculative bubble. The P/BV (price/book value) ratio is also high but the dividend level – low. Today, 95% of investors look for capital gains, the old-school dividend is already forgotten.

I already mentioned that equities are overpriced. Today I wanted to introduce you to a methodology which can help you choose the market.

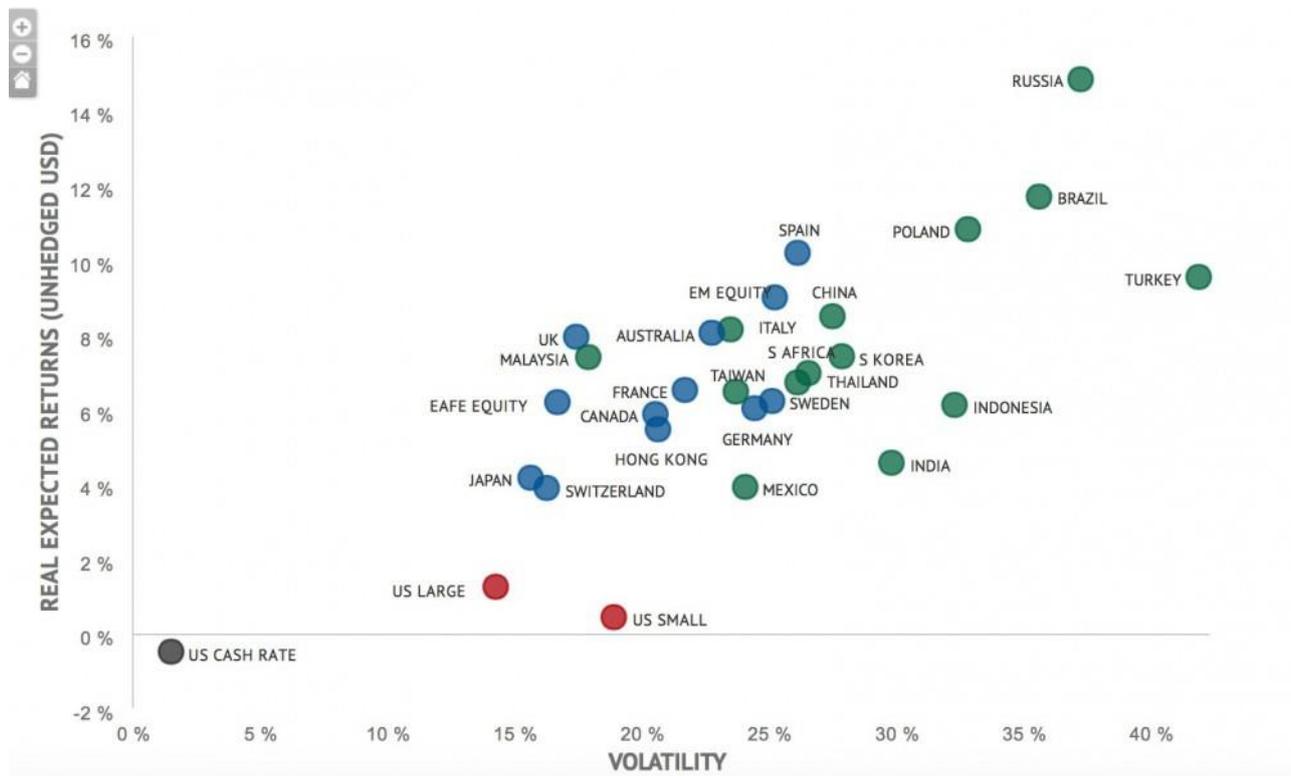
Many investment companies build their models of future returns from the respective market on a 10-year timeframe.

In simple terms, those models let you estimate the return on investment basing on:

- is the market cheap or expensive now,
- is the currency of the market undervalued or overpriced,
- is the country a developed country or emerging market because capital shifts from one to another in predictable cycles.

There are of course many other factors but we don't need to analyse them in depth – as often we are given the all-inclusive prospect.

Below I attach one chart prepared by researchaffiliates.com.



We can see here two axes. Y-axis shows averaged expected returns in the next 10 years. X-axis is a compilation of volatility (risk) for different markets. Green – emerging markets, blue – developed, red – US equities (small and big companies).

Here are some conclusions:

Russia

The biggest potential for gains. This market is very cheap. What is more, it is very much correlated with commodity prices – in January 5-year bear market peaked and most probably finished. What is important is that Russian equities are very volatile. This means that in one year price can jump or fall by 35%. This is not the market for people who cannot handle volatility. Temporary loss of 1/3 of your capital can make it harder to stay on top of your emotions.

Brazil

Another market with great potential. Brazil was hit by the capital outflow from emerging markets and it is 72% lower than in 2008. Although the CAPE is very low – 8,2 – recent recession pushed companies' earnings off the cliff (high P/E). Bad condition of Brazil's market worsens the position of its currency – Real. For a global investor, it may be an interesting market with wide range of long-term possibilities.

Turkey

Turkey is on the list but for different reasons than two previous markets. Turkish lira lost nearly 70% in the last 8 years (vs USD). This currency is very much undervalued. Equity prices are on a decent level. Both CAPE and P/E are around 11. You could feel convinced to invest here but there is one thing to be aware of. Few months ago Turkish air force shot down Russian plane. Apart from a number of cosmetic moves, there was no actual response to this incident. In my opinion, the hit will come from the angle least expected by Turkish regime. Whether it will be tourism, a significant part of Turkey's revenue or financial markets, or maybe energy sector. Whatever weapon Russian will choose, Ankara's exchange is going to feel it. After the attack, when sentiment around Turkey will be very negative – this is going to be the right moment to enter this market.

USA

From analysed markets the American one is in the worst position. In 10 years it is forecasted to be at the same levels as today. Why is that? The US equity market is one of the most expensive in the world – at the level of a speculative bubble. If something is extremely expensive, there is high probability during next decade for the capital to drift towards cheaper, safer markets paying up a fair dividend.

This is how it works. During one cycle capital migrates to emerging markets and during another cycle towards developed world. Last 8 years, the US, Australia, Canada and West Europe made their money. The next cycle capital will probably choose BRICS, Indonesia, Poland, South America and Africa. Africa is very interesting due high GDP growth, low debt levels and young demographic. Much higher growth is possible because Africa and South-East Asia start from different levels than the West.

Conclusion

On the one hand, equity markets are very expensive but on the other hand, there are a number of potential exceptions. If you add to the hypothetical growth of 9-12%/year a decent dividend of 4-6% you would have a very nice return on your investment. Problem? Prices of developed markets are so high thanks to central banks' interventions – responsible for 87% of the global capitalisation of global exchanges. This has nothing to do with economic fundamentals.

If panic enters developed countries, emerging markets will get even cheaper. For now, my global markets exposure is limited to the Russian market. I don't think it will change anytime soon.

What is more, in the short-term we see a return of hurrah-optimism. You should be cautious when you see every investor being optimistic as this is a perfect situation to

make money by shorting. Should I point out to markets to store your capital for the incoming years it will be emerging markets with exposure to commodities

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Another bank files for bankruptcy.

It was over a year ago when we first hear about solvency issues of the Austrian bank Hypo Alpe Adria. Six months and price of bonds dropped by half and the institution itself became bankrupt with 7.6 bn EUR deficit. You can point fingers and shift the blame but let us take a closer look at this patient and define the 'cause of death' which is more and more common these days.

Hypo Alpe Adria's bonds were secured by government and thanks to guarantees of politicians bankers continue to lend money on even riskier conditions. Analysis of banker's mind is simple: our gains, your losses. As long as the economy is growing, risking pays off. Speculation is very profitable business and managers are kindly rewarded for providing great numbers for shareholders.

When the economy doesn't perform that well potential risk materialises and the situation starts to look grim. Credits are not being repaid and bank's profits are slashed. Who cares when the government is the guarantor of our balance sheets? Until losses are bigger than the budget of the whole province.

Bail-in – designed shut down

Facing 7.6 bn EUR deficit – triple the budget of Carinthia – politicians refused to be responsible for repaying this sum. Austrian financial markets supervisory body could push this obligation up to Vien but due to the amount of the deficit, the idea hasn't found much acceptance.

To regain control over situation some plan had to be implemented. The well known bail-in procedure, attested by the EU in the European Recovery and Resolution Directive, came in handy.

According to the EU law all individual clients' obligations were cancelled and whatever was left of 7.6 bn EUR was paid from preferential clients – mostly financial institutions. Assets of shareholders and bondholders were ceased. 'Fortunately', losses were small enough to be covered from those sources and depositors were untouched.

Clients with their savings had luck this time. The situation could be dramatically different when we will hear news about more banks going bankrupt and equities of the whole sector plummeting. Investor's capital may not be enough to cover even small deficit and can threaten the stability of any institution.

Restructuration plan of Hypo Alpe looks like this:

a) 100% bail-in for all subordinated liabilities

Subordinated liabilities are not secured in any way and have at least 5 years since creation. This is the first group to be taken from when assets are being confiscated and the last one to be paid their money back then it comes to bankruptcy proceedings. In fact, everyone who had long-term, unsecured bank bonds lost 100% of their capital.

b) 54% bail-in for preferential liabilities

Preference is derived from the status of the preferential creditor. They are higher in the hierarchy than subordinated liabilities. This classification is a result of specific contracts between institutions that own preferential assets.

Owners of preferential bonds lost over 50% of their capital.

c) The cancellation of all interest payments from 1st March 2015

Anyone having a deposit will not receive any interest from this date. This is not a problem since hardly any deposit is paying any money. Be grateful that you are getting your money back!

d) Postponing all maturing liabilities to 31st December 2023

Putting off your liabilities until 2023 is basically an escape from your obligations. Bank is given 7 years during which its assets cannot be sold. This will result in devaluation of the debt held by investors. Clever move and it is not the last time we are going to watch it especially when economic crisis unravels. Printing money to cover welfare state cause inflation to soar and this in turn significantly lowers the real value of debt in EUR.

Postponing the problem of liabilities vis-à-vis shareholders and bondholders for 7 years lowers the value of those payments thanks to inflation too. Bank will get away from its creditors paying their dues with worthless currency.

Summary

The case of Hypo Alpe Adria is very important. It shows how the system we have works and what we can expect from it. Apart from the destruction of banks' balances and the tempo in which situation escalates, we can observe how politicians act. Carinthia was a guarantor of 10.2 bn EUR. Amount impossible to stomach for the province with the budget of 20% this sum.

To show the scale of what I'm talking about: Poland – country with population 4 times of Austria – has its Banking Guarantee Fund (created to be used during situation similar to Hypo Alpe Adria) amounts only to 1/3 of Austria's bank liabilities.

Now I encourage you to check whether banking sector in your country and check for how long you will be waiting until your money comes back to you. In Poland it's 20 days (BGF data) but what stands in the way to use the solution of Hypo Alpe Adria? Delay payments for a year or seven? How much your money will be worth then?

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Systematic investment of small sums. Does it make any sense?

No longer than a month ago our reader – Rafikol – touched on a very important topic reminding me not to forget about people who are just starting to build their capital.

„I have a big favour to ask of you, Trader. Can you write an article about investing small sums – let it be \$200/month with medium to long term perspective. I'm thinking about equities, commodities, bonds and currencies”.

Some people could say that \$200 per month is too small of a sum to invest. On the one hand, it is far from being a huge capital. On the other hand, we can expect quite a nice capital after a dozen of years especially that this money is put to work.

Also, we must understand that in many cases saving a bigger amount is simply hard.

Having said that, none of us has an excuse not to save for our future and to rely on the government in this department. Today we are starting to understand that we either will work until we die or our pensions will suffice only for vegetation. It's you

making sure you live comfortably when you are old or hoping that government will budget for social expenditure.

\$200 which Rafikol mentioned seems to be minuscule. This is why we are going to use compounding interest and long-term perspective to have something to work with.

According to my calculations, investing \$200 each month with an averaged ROI 12% each year, after 10 years we will have \$47 000. Both from our deposits \$24 000 ($\200×120) and returns of 23 000.

The situation looks much better after 20 years. Our capital will be equal to \$193 000 (\$48 000 of our deposits + \$145 000 of capital gains). Ultimately, the longer our time frame the more opportunities there to multiply our money. For simplification I omitted inflation.

This 12% is not an easy goal. We need a vast knowledge and for that constant education is a must. Still it is our financial situation/future we are talking about so it's worth paying attention. Investing is not as complicated as portrayed by financial institutions which perpetuate a myth of 'specialised advisory'. Think: instead of working for themselves (having their own business) they are still being employed.

Before we will go through particular assets I want to point out how not to invest.

a) Stay away from any form of an intermediary/middleman that generates cost. Any form of commission paid lowers our profit.

b) Stay away from expensive investment funds – this means approximately 75-90% of the market.

c) Pay attention to the value of your transaction. It is more reasonable to accumulate capital for few months and make one deal rather than making a purchase each month. The cost of 6 small transactions may be higher than our profit that we can make in 6 months.

d) Do not buy expensive assets. 'Expensive' means two things:

Firstly, assets recently experienced a very strong surge and are expensive in short-term (RSI over 60 and very high level of optimism).

Secondly, assets experiencing late (or last) stage of their boom – their price compared with other assets will be high. A good example is equities in developed countries compared to precious metals, real estate and commodities etc.

e) Avoid assets with high hidden costs. Most of the investment funds publish only official costs putting their true charges in fine print.

Short selling through inverse funds can make our return lower by few percentage points. Assuming we were shorting index which hasn't changed its price, we are going to lose money. A similar situation happens when investing in commodities through CFD or ETN where contango occurs.

To show you how seemingly trivial charges affect our long-term result I assumed that we use an intermediary or a fund costing us only 2% per year. Our return goes down from 12% to 10%.

In 20 years we accumulated not \$193 000 but \$150 000 and what's more our capital made not \$143 000 but only \$102 000 and here you can see the real difference.

What would I invest in having \$200/month?

I want to clarify from the beginning that investing \$200 each month we will pay horrendous commissions (in percentage terms). In my opinion, much more reasonable is to save your money for few months and then invest after the end of calendar year when prices of many assets are very low. The same happened this year when simultaneously metals, commodities and equities experienced nose dive. "Sell in May and go away" was created for a reason.

Let's assume we have \$2 500. I believe that dividing this sum across different assets doesn't make sense. If I had to invest today, I would put the whole sum in silver because it's undervalued when comparing it to gold and equities.

In case that the situation will not change in a year, I would move part of the capital to either industrial or agricultural commodities – not both. The cost of buying cheap in servicing ETN (0.6% annual charge) is a sum of 15 USD, and this makes 2.4% in our situation. Increasing costs by buying both funds doesn't make any sense.

Next year, equities would be another step. You should focus exclusively on emerging markets giving much more return than developed alternatives. Cheap in servicing ETF in any developing market or with more aggressive approach ETF closed only to the Russian market. Note that the panic in developed markets will most definitely result in a global bear market. This can make cheap equities even cheaper.

Other assets:

What I wouldn't do (with today's circumstances) is investing in the real estate market - REITs. Very high prices, low dividend and high potential for falls. Some exceptions can be found in Singapore's REITs and emerging markets ETFs or REITs. Still I would recommend investing in three primary groups mentioned above – silver, commodities, EM equities – they are a much safer solution.

Bonds are off the list. Their risk is very high because of artificially inflated price by direct purchases of central banks and the end of the 35-year period of ever-lower

interest rates. The change in investors' minds is coming. Soon 'safe bonds' are going to be a 'guarantor of a loss' thanks to interest rates' hike, bankruptcies, debt restructuring or rising inflation.

I haven't mentioned gold on purpose. Our capital of \$2 500 per year can be enough to buy 2 oz of gold. This is a very good start of your adventure with gold but remember that price of buying/selling coins below 1oz is very high. We should rather think about a fund fully (100%) secured by physical metal. Look at Swiss ZKB or Canadian Sprott's fund.

Later, capital should be spread across equities, precious metals and real estate. We should not forget about a cash buffer especially if the situation would resemble that of today (very high prices across all groups of assets). It is better to keep your savings in safe currency (CHF) rather than forcibly invest in the overpriced market. This is not overruled by an argument that we invest thinking about long-term. I can give you an example: investors that bought Polish equities in 2007 are still in the red notwithstanding the accumulation of dividends for over a decade.

Common sense, critical thinking and never ending financial education – the three pillars of success.

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